A Study in the Spirituality of Louise de Marillac: As Reflective of the French School of Spirituality

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GENERAL INTRODUCTION TO THE SPIRITUALITY OF
SAINT LOUISE DE MARILLAC
Introductory Outline to the Article

1.0 Spiritual Framework: (1591 - 1660)
  1.1 Introduction
  1.2 The French School of Spirituality
    1.2.1 Background: Pierre Cardinal de Bérulle
    1.2.2 Spiritual Doctrine of Pierre de Bérulle
    1.2.3 Principles of Bérulle’s Spirituality
    1.2.4 Development of Bérullian Spirituality
    1.2.5 Language of the French School of Spirituality
  1.3 Summary

2.0 Saint Louise de Marillac in Relation to the French School of Spirituality
  2.1 Introduction
  2.2 Significant Influences Au Courant de Bérulle
    2.2.1 Michel de Marillac
    2.2.2 Bishop Jean-Pierre Camus
    2.2.3 Francis de Sales
    2.2.4 Bérulle
    2.2.5 Vincent de Paul
    2.2.6 Conclusion
  2.3 Basic Principles of the French School of Spirituality as Illustrated in the Writings of Saint Louise de Marillac
    2.3.1 Introduction
    2.3.2 Theological Principles
    2.3.3 Prayer and Approach to Mission
    2.3.4 Pedagogy and Practices
    2.3.5 Scriptural Basis of the French School of Spirituality
    2.3.6 Original Scriptural Experience
  2.4 Language of the French School of Spirituality as evidenced in the Writings of Louise de Marillac
  2.5 Conclusion
Three paintings attributed to Saint Louise de Marillac.
*Mother House of the Daughters of Charity, Paris, France.*
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1.0 Spiritual Framework: (1591 - 1660)

1.1 Introduction

The spiritual framework in which Louise de Marillac lived was that which is known as the French School of Spirituality. As the seventeenth century is known historically as "Le grand siècle," so too it might be termed "Un grand siècle" of spirituality.¹ It was during this century that numerous saints made outstanding contributions to the field of spirituality, and the division of theology and spirituality which had occurred during the scholastic period was reunited into an integrated whole. Major figures of this period include: Saint Francis de Sales, Saint Jane de Chantal, Cardinal de Bérulle, Charles de Condren, Jean-Jacques Olier, Saint Vincent de Paul, Saint John Eudes, Père Lallement, Blessed Marie of the Incarnation,² Blessed Madeleine of Saint Joseph, Saint Margaret Mary Alacoque, Saint Louis Marie de Montfort, Saint Jean-Baptist de La Salle and, of course, Saint Louise de Marillac. The seventeenth century was also a period in which lay leadership in spirituality was prevalent with such persons as Madame Acarie³ and Michel de Marillac. Fruits of the period would include the renewal of laity and clergy, foundation of seminaries, parish missions, spiritual direction, and the emergence of congregations devoted to apostolic

¹ "Le XVII siècle est l'âge d'or de la spiritualité en France." A. Rayez, "Française (école)," Dictionnaire de Spiritualité (Paris: Gabriel Beauchesne et ses fils, 1937), t. V, col. 783. Hereinafter cited as DS.


³ Madame Acarie was later to join the Carmelites and to be known as 'Marie of the Incarnation.' She also was to become 'Blessed.'
works both within and beyond France.4

In the first section of this study we shall limit ourselves to an overview of the French School of Spirituality, considering briefly the persons who shaped the period and the resultant major characteristics of the school. In the second section we shall situate Saint Louise de Marillac’s spirituality within the framework of the French School, and indicate those persons who particularly influenced her spiritual development.

1.2 The French School of Spirituality

1.2.1 Background - Pierre Cardinal de Bérulle

It is an accepted fact that the major force in the development of French spirituality during this time was Pierre Cardinal de Bérulle. His spirituality was inspired by great saints and traditions, and he in turn inspired great saints and traditions. Bérulle was born in 1575 and died in 1629. Deeply involved in Church and State, he was a mystic who transformed French spirituality and left a spiritual legacy to the Christian world.

Using Bérulle as a focal point for the French School of Spirituality, let us consider the factors and persons that contributed to his spiritual theology, its concepts, its effects and its legacy. Bérulle’s spiritual theology was influenced by Saint Augustine and Saint Thomas Aquinas, Ruysbroek from the Low Countries, Ignatius of Loyola, and Saint Teresa of Avila whose books he read on his knees.5 Within the immediate circle of influence were: Saint Francis de Sales, whom he admired as a friend and saint; his cousin, Madame Acarie, who became Marie of the Incarnation; founder of the French Carmel, and the Carmelites, Mère Madeleine de Saint Joseph; and Mère Catherine de Jésus. Each of the

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foregoing contributed to the development of Bérulle’s spiritual thought and work. Bérulle espoused Saint Augustine’s ontology regarding the sinfulness of humans, thus leading to his strong emphasis on the soteriology of Jesus. He followed Saint Thomas’ view on grace and the mystical body. From Ignatius and Teresa he gleaned his strong emphasis on the humanity of Jesus. From Francis de Sales’ Treatise on The Love of God, which emphasized the primary place of meeting God as the “la cime” or “la fine pointe” of one’s being, Bérulle may have come to stress the annihilation of all of one’s self-interest as prerequisite for the adoration of God. It was in Madame Acarie’s salon that the religious thinkers of the day met to pray and to discuss, and it was with her too that Bérulle was instrumental in bringing the reformed Carmelites to France in 1604. Mère Madeleine and Mère Catherine, members of this Carmel, were supportive of Bérulle in his spiritual thoughts on the Incarnation and the Vows of Servitude, as well as in

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6 For the ‘inner sanctuary’ or inner solitude of the soul, Francis de Sales did not use the term “ground” but “la cime,” the mountaintop (Jones et al., The Study of Spirituality, 384); and “fine pointe,” the fine point of the soul (DS, I, 1540). In Treatise On the Love of God, I, 85, 86, one finds the words “summit” and “supreme point” as translations of these terms.

Bérulle, uses the term “fond” to denote the “depths of one’s being:” “Ce mouvement est imprimé par la puissance du créateur dans l’intime de sa créature, et dans le fond de l’être créé dès l’instant même qu’il est créé” (DS, I, 1551). This word fond becomes a term characteristic of the French School.
the foundation of the Oratory. As a reputed spiritual director, Bérulle was director to, and friend of, such great persons as Vincent de Paul and Jean Jacques Olier, upon whom he had a profound effect.

1.2.2 Spiritual Doctrine of Pierre de Bérulle

Bérulle was ordained to the priesthood June 5, 1599. During his forty day preparatory retreat he received his initial inspiration for the renewal of the priesthood, which became the heart of his life and mission. Throughout his priestly life Bérulle wrote several treatises which embodied his spiritual doctrine. Of these, the most important were L'Estat et les grandeurs de Jésus in 1623, and Vie de Jésus in 1629, which crystallized and defended his teachings on the Incarnation. A contemplative in action, Bérulle was involved in politics, as well as being committed to establishing religious houses, spiritual direction, education and religious renewal circles of his day.

In the development of his spiritual doctrine two events seem key. The first occurred during his election retreat of 1602, when thinking of religious life, Bérulle received a definite insight from God that he was not called thus; rather, he felt led to a deeper interior life centered on

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7 Bérulle wrote Traité des Energumènes on diabolical possession in 1599, L'Estat et les grandeurs de Jésus in 1622-3, the Élévation sur Ste Madeleine in 1625 and Vie de Jésus, in 1629. DS, I, 1548.

8 In politics Bérulle intervened in the reconciliation of Louis XIII with Marie de Médicis in 1619, assisted in the negotiations for the marriage of Henriette of France to Charles Stuart of England in 1624, was involved in preparing the treaty of 1626 with Spain, and ultimately was disgraced by Richelieu in 1629 (Deville, 44-45). In establishing religious houses, Bérulle was instrumental in bringing the reformed Carmel to France; between 1604 and 1660, sixty-two Carmelite Monasteries were born in France. To the displeasure of the Carmelite Fathers, Bérulle, with Gallemant and Duval, was named superior of the Carmelites and in 1614 was named perpetual visitor of the Carmels, a position which was reconfirmed by Popes Paul V in 1620, Grégoire XV in 1621 and Urban VIII in 1623. In addition to Carmel, Bérulle founded the French Oratory in 1611 for the renewal of diocesan priests. The members celebrated the Office in choir, spent long hours in prayer, gave themselves to pastoral ministry, to the study of the Bible, the Fathers of the Church and Theology. In the bull of approbation in 1613, the Pope asked them to accept the duty of education in the colleges. In 1615, the Oratorians under Bérulle, made a vow of servitude to Jesus recognizing him as their ultimate superior (Deville, 42).

As visitor of the Carmels and Founder of the Oratory, Bérulle directed many in the spiritual life, among whom were Saint Vincent de Paul. As a member of Madame Acarie's circle, Bérulle exchanged views with professors of the Sorbonne and lay leaders of renewal, among whom would have been Michel de Marillac, uncle of Louise (DS, I, 1539).
Christ, the Incarnate Word, the model of self-emptying or annihilation. The second event happened in 1607 when Bérulle refused to tutor the dauphin, and through a mystical grace he received a deep realization that he was to proclaim the Incarnate Word of God. Henceforth it would become his central focus, to the degree that Pope Urban VIII would call him "l'apôtre du Verbe Incarné."10

Through a study of his writings, and the tradition of his works, several key principles emerge as the touchstones of the Spirituality of Pierre de Bérulle. With nuances contributed by his followers these became the main characteristics of the French School of Spirituality. The hallmarks of this spirituality were: theocentric and Trinitarian, Christocentric, Marian, pastoral and ecclesial.11 For the purposes of this introductory study it is sufficient to briefly examine each aspect in order to gain an overview of the spiritual thought of the time.

1.2.3 Principles of Bérulle’s Spirituality

i. Theocentric and Trinitarian

Bérulle wrote in his Grandeurs that Jesus is the center of the world and the world must be in a continual movement towards him.12 For Bérulle, God must be reverenced and adored for his perfection and grandeur. What Bérulle rekindled was the virtue of religion, and with it the realization that all Christians who wished to remain in the truth must have God as the center of all things. He saw God as infinitely immanent and transcendent. How could one not adore so great a God in his essence and in his person, in his being and in his works?13 For Bérulle it was necessary to adore God in the unity of his essence and in the Trinity of his persons. Jesus could not be separated from the Father whom he had come to image.

In Trinitarian theocentricism, Jesus was central. Jesus, the divine-human, offered perfect adoration to the Father through his emptying
of self in his Incarnation and death. Humans, in imitation of him, grow in the perfection of adoration as they empty themselves, die to their false selves and create a place for God in the ground or fond of their beings, which the Holy Spirit may fill with the waters of new life. In contemplating Jesus adoring the Father, humans come to an awareness in faith of the grandeur of God and of their own littleness, even their nothingness, (anéantissement) before the infinity and eternity of God.

For Bérulle, the divine unity creates the tendency toward unity in creatures. In the relationship between humans and God, the Divine grounds and permeates all: "God creating and forming all things, refers them and relates them all to himself... a movement more intimate to the creature than his own being itself." In the Trinitarian mystery, the "unity of essence" is also a "unity of love." The Father is "fontal deity," the source and even end of all, "like an admirable circle," who performs "the work of a father and mother simultaneously as regards his son and eternal Word." The Son, "the image the Father has formed of himself" is "a continual reference to his Father." The Holy Spirit, produced by the Father with the Word, is their "unity of love." For Bérulle, praise was the perfect expression of adoration of God. It was beyond the words of love and obedience and embodied the total forgetfulness of self, as one focused on the grandeur and greatness of the one loved and obeyed. It was necessary to adore the Trinity, disposing oneself to this action for eternity and in time. Two foundations of this adoration consisted in a high esteem for the grandeur of God and a concomitant low esteem for created things in relation to the greatness of their creator. Bérulle maintained that persons were most themselves when they reflected the true relationship of love of God. Jesus was the perfect adorer of the Father, the perfect witness to this love relationship, and it was upon him that Bérulle focused his spiritual

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15 Bérulle as cited by Thompson in CWS: Bérulle, 33-34. Cf. DS, I, 1566 (Col. 1203, Piété); Cochois, 98.
17 Molien, DS, V, 1549: "Il faut aussi adorer la Trinité se disposant à agir de toute éternité et agissant dans le temps" (Oeuvres, col. 1200, Piété, 4).
 doctrine.\textsuperscript{18}  

ii. Christological and Soteriological

The most characteristic principle of Bérulle's spirituality is its Christocentricism. Initially espousing the abstract school of spirituality, Bérulle however did see Jesus as the exemplar of the ascent to the Father.\textsuperscript{19} But in his “Christocentric experience” of 1607\textsuperscript{20} he began to integrate the abstract with a more biblical perspective, viewing the “Incarnation of Jesus as a prolongation of the Trinitarian mystery on earth.”\textsuperscript{21} All the Trinitarian persons were involved in the Incarnation: the Father through his initiative, the Holy Spirit in his fecundity, and the Word, the perfect Image.\textsuperscript{22} Bérulle calls the hypostatic union the substance of the mystery of the Incarnation. His originality lies in the “commerce and communication between Jesus' divinity and humanity.” “He who is becomes; the Uncreated is created; the One who enriches the world becomes poor.” There can be no bypassing or surpassing Jesus' humanity which was one of poverty, of dénouement, of self-emptying. Our goal is the Transcendent One, but our goal is also Jesus and he is our way to the Father.\textsuperscript{23}

Through Jesus' humanity persons enter into a new order. Humanity is deified through Jesus, who became man to make us gods. Bérulle

\textsuperscript{18} Raymond Deville, \textit{L'école française de spiritualité} - Bibliothèque d'Histoire du Christianisme, n. 11 (Paris: Desclée, 1987), 45. Grandeurs de Jésus, Migne, 183-184:

\begin{quote}
Vous êtes, maintenant, ô Jésus! Cet adorateur, cet homme, ce serviteur infini en puissance, en qualité, en dignité, pour satisfaire pleinement à ce devoir et pour rendre ce divin hommage. Vous êtes cet homme aimant, adorant et servant la majesté suprême comme elle est digne d'être aimée, servie et honorée. O grandeur de Jésus, même en son état d'abaissement et de servitude, d'être seul digne de rendre un parfait hommage à la divinité!
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{19} The “abstract school” refers to a mysticism which transcends all concepts and images as the sign of the deepest mystical union with the Divine. Some even saw the humanity of Jesus as needing to be transcended (\textit{CWS: Bérulle}, 10). This apophatic theological approach was taught by Dionysius the Areopagite, and had a profound influence on spirituality. Cf., Jones et al., \textit{The Study of Spirituality}, 184-189. Hereinafter cited as Jones et al. In the Seventeenth Century, Benoît de Canfield was a major proponent of this mysticism (Lebrun, \textit{DS}, V, 921).

\textsuperscript{20} Upon refusing the request to tutor the Dauphin, Bérulle became intensely aware that his future lay in proclaiming the Incarnation of Jesus.

\textsuperscript{21} \textit{CWS: Bérulle}, 35.

\textsuperscript{22} Ibid., 36. Bérulle writes that the Incarnation is “ours through a gift of the Father, through the activity of the Holy Spirit, through the subsistence of the Son....” (Cf. pp.132-4, 157).

\textsuperscript{23} Ibid., 36. Cf. \textit{DS}, I, 1564 (Col. 1181, Piété).
uses the unique term “état” to develop this thought. He sees in the mystery of the Incarnation “the past, present and perpetual.” Things are over as regards their execution, but present as regards their power (vertu), and the love with which they have been accomplished will never pass away. There is a power of deification perpetually at work in the events of the Incarnation. Hence the “states” of Jesus are the archetype of “states” in the Christian. For Bérulle the pre-eminent state of the human Jesus was that of his servitude, because in emptying himself of his divinity to become human he assumed the state or état of one who was to be God’s servant. It is precisely this état that Bérulle exhorts all persons to adhere to through their wills. He is conscious of the human’s fragility apart from God. Thus, if humans have an innate tending toward God in their lives and actions, then the reverse is a nothingness (néant), or impotency, without God. Bérulle might emphasize the humans’ nothingness and sinfulness, but he also acclaims the humans’ grandeur in their tending toward God and their reflection of the Trinity in their very being. He wrote:

From the first, God has given us an instinct and movement toward himself ... and this movement is inseparable from the creature and will endure forever.

It is Jesus who has come to heal the rupture of the relationship between God and humans. He, as the perfect adorer and servant, incorporates humans into his life and love and empowers them to imitate

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24 The Bérullian term état referred to “the habitual dispositions of a person which both define the depths or the quality of this person and lie at the source of every action. It was distinct from actions.” Dupré and Saliens, Christian Spirituality, 66.

DS, IV, 1372: “Le mot état, très fréquent dans le langage chrétien, surtout dans celui des auteurs spirituels de 17e siècle,...signifie, de façon générale, une manière d’être, une situation permanente et durable.”


26 Bérulle as cited by Thompson in CWS: Bérulle, 37:

For the incarnation of the Word is the basis and foundation... of the deification of all the states and mysteries sharing in the life and earthly voyage of the Son of God upon earth... Jesus... wishes that we have a unique share in these various states, according to the diversity of his will for us and our piety toward him.

Cf., Jones et al., The Study of Spirituality, 390: “The ‘interior states’ of the mysteries of Our Lord’s life produce correlative ‘states’ in chosen souls.”

27 Molien, DS, 1, 1567 (Col. 1137, Piété).

28 Pierre de Bérulle as cited in CWS: Bérulle, 40.
him in adoration and servitude of God. Particularly through the Eucharist, it is by him and with him that Christians must render praise to God on earth as it is rendered to him in heaven by the angels.  

Through servitude, humans deepen their creaturely dependence upon God, healing them of the effects of sin and enabling them to undergo the anéantissement, the “no-saying” to any attitude or action away from Christ. Through incorporation into Christ, humans become adorers in action and being. “Jesus alone, adores by state, the divine persons imprinted into the “fount” of his created being.” In turn, persons must honor the Son of God “first by adoration, secondly by love and thirdly by an adoring love -- loving while adoring.”  

For Bérulle, servitude and adoration are the two great actions within the spiritual life which guide persons to their goal and heal them of sinful obstructions which impede their progress. In one’s “nothingness,” the person comes to understand sin within oneself, and the realization that movement away from sin demands a movement into the “ground” of one’s being -- one’s true self, where there can be union with God. Through this contemplation, the person shares in the self-emptying of Jesus, in his sufferings and death to be one with the Father, and in his adoration of his Father.  

To inspire devotion to the Word Incarnate, Bérulle spoke of the desire to possess fully and interiorly the life of Jesus grafted onto the Christian by Baptism. Especially in the Eucharist, Jesus might bind souls to himself where they could draw from the plenitude of the divinity which lives in him. The efficacy and singular virtue of the sacrament of his body incorporates souls with his holy humanity and makes them to live in him and his life as members, and with him in his Father.  

The ongoing conversion process of the Christian was to unite in-

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30 Bérulle, G. 11, 6, 348-349, as cited by Thompson, in CWS: Bérulle, 42.
32 Ibid., 42.
33 Molien, DS, I, 1553. (Grandeurs, Discours, VII, 2): “Nous devrions, d’un vouloir constant et ardent penser à lui, traiter avec lui, nous élever à lui; nous devrions entrer en l’abime de ses grâces et de ses faveurs.”
34 Ibid. (col. 968, Piété, XXIV).
cessantly one’s life, one’s thoughts and one’s works with those of Jesus.35

In his devotion to the Incarnate Word, Bérulle addresses the totality of Jesus -- the God-Man. Bourgoing stated:

It must be noted that this servant of God and friend of the Bridegroom chiefly regarded and adored the divine person of Jesus Christ our Lord united to our nature -- that is to say, himself, considered in his personality, in his divinely human being; not only as God, nor yet as man, or in his humanity taken separately, but rather as God-man, in his substantial status, which comprises his greatness and his abasement, his divine and human sonship in one same person and the attributes of either nature in the single hypostasis of the God-Word.36

Bérulle’s integration of theology and spirituality centered around the Incarnate Word. It is through the Word that earth is sanctified and God adored. The Incarnate Word was not only the internal unity of all things but the embodiment of the depths of human spirituality in adoration. By centering his spirituality on the experience of God adoring God, Bérulle restored adoration as the radical experience of Christianity. For Bérulle the mystery of the Incarnation was paramount as the following illustrates:

For it is in this mystery that heaven is open and earth is sanctified and God adored -- and this by an adoration that is new, an ineffable adoration unknown before on earth and in heaven itself. Before this, heaven had adoring spirits and a God adored, but it did not yet have a God adoring.37


Nous devons incessamment unir notre vie à sa vie, et nos labeurs à ses labeurs, et avoir notre pensée si remplie de lui et de sa vie divine... tant intérieurement qu’extérieurément, que nous n’ayons point de temps ni d’esprit pour penser à nous-mêmes, ni à nos peines.


37 Bérulle as cited by Dupré and Saliers, Christian Spirituality, 48 (Discours I.3).
The Word was the Savior of the world. Humankind had sinned, had refused the ultimate glory that was due to God. In Jesus, the God-Man, the adoring Word, humankind was redeemed through the power of his suffering and death, his self-emptying, his ultimate offering of glory to his Father in the supreme act of submission to the Father’s Will. Appropriating humans’ sin to himself, Jesus set humans free to live a new life in the Spirit, to be empowered to offer praise and glory to God their Creator. Jesus, the Incarnate Word, was the ultimate way and light for Bérulle. The self-humiliation of the Word Incarnate was the most powerful motive for him to humble himself in order to serve God truly. Bérulle’s favorite considerations on the Incarnate Word were on the interior state and the operations of the Holy Spirit in his most holy soul, his life in us and our participation in his state. Much of Bérulle’s thoughts on the Incarnate Word were influenced by the Epistles of Saint Paul, the Gospel of John and the Greek Fathers. Hence one finds images and language similar to that of Saint Paul and Saint John.38

iii. Mariological

A third characteristic of Bérulle’s spirituality was its Marian tone. His devotion to Mary was more doctrinal and intellectual, less popular than the regular piety but very tender. His commentators maintain that in many aspects he renewed devotion to the Blessed Virgin.39 Never did he separate the Son from the Mother. In his writings it is the mystery of the Incarnation to which he attaches his comments on the Blessed

38 Pourrat, 330-331.
39 Molien, DS, I, 1559.
Virgin. Through the Incarnation, Mary was in a profound way directly united with the Trinity. At the moment of the Incarnation, God the Father took her for his spouse, the Word chose her for his mother, and the Holy Spirit executed these divine counsels within her.

For this eminent vocation, Mary was prepared by an Immaculate Conception and perfect purity which disposed her to realize the états of Jesus. Before the Incarnation, through the grace of God, her life was a perpetual movement toward God. After her Fiat she was consumed in a rare grace, by which she entered into a new state, operating within her. She is not in an action but in a state (état) — because her occupation was permanent, not passing.

Bérulle wished his devotion to Mary, although dogmatically expressed, to be exterior and tender. In the houses of the Oratory, every day was begun with the ringing of the Ave Maria. Bérulle also counseled the Carmelite nuns of whom he was superior, “to kneel before the Blessed Virgin daily to honor her, to offer her their being, their life and their actions, and to express this interior and spiritual devotion exteriorly and sensibly.” Bérulle repeated that it was necessary to go to Jesus through Mary. He counseled his followers: “never to separate

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40 Ibid. (col. 430, Vie de Jésus, ch.v):

Cette âme sainte et divine est en l’Église ce que l’aurore est au firmament, et elle précède immédiatement le soleil. Mais elle est plus que l’aurore, car elle ne le précède pas seulement, elle le doit porter et enfantner au monde et donner la vie, le salut, la lumière à l’univers, et y produire un soleil Orient, duquel celui-ci qui nous éclaire n’est que l’ombre et la figure.


#721: Mary, the all-holy ever-virgin Mother of God, is the masterwork of the mission of the Son and the Spirit in the fullness of time... the Father found the dwelling place where his Son and his Spirit could dwell among me... In her, the “wonders of God” that the Spirit was to fulfill in Christ and the Church began to be manifested.

#963: “Mary’s role in the Church is inseparable from her union with Christ and flows directly from it. This union of the mother with the Son in the work of salvation is made manifest from the time of Christ’s virginal conception up to his death’”...

41 Ibid. (col. 1106, Piété, xcvi): “La chair du Sauveur est donc prise et tirée de sa chair (à Marie) par l’effort très puissant, très précieux, très divin non d’un amour humain ou spirituel seulement, mais de l’amour incréé qui est le Saint-Esprit.”

42 Ibid. (col. 462, 463, Vie de Jésus, ch.v).

43 Molien, DS, I, 1561.
in their devotion that which God had joined together in the order of grace."\textsuperscript{44}

In discussing the relationship of Jesus and Mary, Bérulle states that the natural realm of mother and son was never lost: "Elle le voit, elle le sent, elle l'aime, elle le regarde comme son fils."\textsuperscript{45} Bérulle suggests that one contemplate on the attitude of Mary during the birth and childhood of Jesus. For Mary, the infancy created a very special participation in Jesus' life and began in her an inner transformation making her soul correspond to that of Jesus. Herein Mary becomes a "contemplative mystic of the Incarnate Word."\textsuperscript{46}

In the Paschal mysteries, Bérulle also saw Mary's participation in a mystical fashion in which "attentive to the interior and spiritual life of her Son," she was transformed in the depths of her being through her participation in his life, death and resurrection.\textsuperscript{47} It was Bérulle's great conviction of the sublimity of the relationship between Jesus and Mary that led him to his emphasis on the Vows of Servitude to them.\textsuperscript{48}

iv. Ecclesial and Pastoral

Another hallmark of the French School of Spirituality was that of spiritual renewal. For Bérulle this reality found its expression especially in the renewal of the clergy. His desire for such renewal found its culmination in the foundation of the French Oratory in 1611. This was in keeping with the strong pastoral dimension in his ecclesiology. Bérulle's view of the Church combined his Trinitarian and Christological doctrines. His vision of the Church united the theoretical and practical, theology and spirituality. For him the Church's deepest nature was of mission oriented to the "salvation of people; the disciples' preaching of our Savior; in a word, the entire state and exercise of the Christian Religion. Thus it is as the basis and foundation of the house of God."\textsuperscript{49}

"Bérulle was a reformer seeking to renew the Church especially through a spiritual transformation."\textsuperscript{50} The charism which he brought to the Church was his emphasis on the renewal of the priesthood, to which he devoted himself after 1599. Because of controversies with the

\textsuperscript{44} Ibid. (col. 1285, Piété).
\textsuperscript{45} Deville, 39.
\textsuperscript{47} Ibid. Cf. CCC, #964: "Thus the Blessed Virgin advanced in her pilgrimage of faith, and faithfully persevered in her union with her Son unto the cross."
\textsuperscript{49} Bérulle as cited by Thompson in CWS: Bérulle, 55-56.
\textsuperscript{50} Ibid.
Calvinists, he focused his attention on a theology of ministry which he rooted in his vision of the Church and Jesus. Bérulle situated in the theology of the Incarnate Word the origin and foundation of all states to which God calls people. He gave predominance to the state of the priesthood, because priests bear the character of Jesus imprinted upon their souls, doubly through the sacraments of baptism and of orders.51

At this time the renewal of the priesthood was a crucial issue for the renewal of the Church but, although Bérulle concentrated on the priestly state, he had a very high opinion of the lay state. In his own experiences and especially through Mme Acarie's salon, he had interacted closely with lay people who were seeking perfection and who were most interested in the things of God and Church.52 Bérulle maintained that "all were called to perfection through their own unique manner of participating in the various states of Christ," and that every soul must be regarded "as a subject of God's holiness which should shine and operate in him or her."53

Another aspect of Bérulle's ecclesiology was sacramental, particularly the Eucharist. His teaching on the Eucharist expresses the relationship between the mysteries of the Trinity, the Incarnation and the Eucharist.54 For Bérulle, the way the divine persons reside in one another is somehow reflected in God's residence in Jesus as incarnate and as eucharistically present.55

The foregoing four theological principles form the basis of Bérulle's spirituality. Several of his followers built on his framework and gave shape to what is now considered to be the characteristics of the French School. We shall now look at the nuances they contributed to Bérulle's spirituality.

1.2.4 Development of Bérullian Spirituality

Bérulle died in 1629 but his influence on those whom he directed and inspired continued for many years, both among the members of his Oratorian community and his contemporaries.

51 Ibid. Cf. Cochois, 125, 129.
52 The Lay Aristocracy played an important role in the renewal of the French Church. Madame Acarie's circle was a center for theological discussion and prayer. Through her and such associates the Renewed Carmelites were brought to Paris in 1604. It was also through the laity that the Capucines, known as the Daughters of the Passion, were brought to Paris in 1606.
54 CWS: Berulle, 138, 6, 1, 245 Sixth Discourse....
55 CWS: Bérulle, 58. Cf. pp. 138-139 (Grandeurs: Sixth Discourse); Cochois, 128.
i. Charles de Condren: (1588-1641)

Berulle’s immediate successor as Superior General of the Oratorians was Charles de Condren. He was an excellent theologian but a poor administrator. He was once described as “a true Christian, an apostolic man, and a perfect Priest of Jesus Christ.”56 In his direction of the Oratorians, Condren withdrew them from directing religious so that they would be more available for missions and seminaries in an effort to reestablish the ecclesiastical spirit in the clergy.57

Condren’s contribution to the development of the French School of Spirituality is evidenced in his particular emphasis on some aspects of Bérrullian spirituality, and especially in his influence on Jean-Jacques Olier and John Eudes. Condren was not a prolific writer; hence his spiritual doctrine is contained in his letters, his sermons, and his direction to his followers.58 Condren’s unique contribution to Bérrullian spirituality lies in his theology of Christ and the Church. There are echoes of Bérrulle’s thoughts, but Condren had his own emphasis which Olier and Eudes were to popularize. Central to Condren’s spirituality was his high esteem for the priesthood, coupled with his feelings of unworthiness to be raised to it.59

It was the idea of the priesthood and sacrifice that Condren associated with his Christology. Condren’s Christ was the priest and sacrifice. Bérrulle’s Christ was the adoring Christ in this sacrifice. The theocentricism of Bérrulle is found in Condren’s thought. God is the holiest, and infinitely transcendent above the world and sinful humanity. For Bérrulle, adoration was expressed in praise; for Condren, adoration was expressed in sacrifice, immolation and the victim state. Both spoke often of “anéantissement.” Both spoke of the victim state of Jesus. However, Condren saw nothing as worthy of God except the unique sacrifice of Jesus, and thus he frequently spoke of the Mass. Jesus found there “the means of continuing in all centuries the same sacrifice and

56 Deville, 49. Le Père Louise Quinet, abbé de Barbery, wrote this description of Condren.
57 Deville, 54.
58 Of note is the fact that Condren was also Bérrulle’s confessor.
59 Deville, 53:

He had heard a spiritual voice tell him, “I wish that you be a Priest, and that you serve in my Church.” This experience filled him with such a spiritual sweetness and love of the priesthood and the Church that he immediately prostrated himself on the ground and offered himself to God with such resolution to obey his will that he never hesitated in it.
of multiplying each day his offering on his altars." Condren spoke frequently of death and annihilation of self for God, even to echoing the "nada" of Saint John of the Cross. Central to Condren's theology is adoration and union with Jesus Christ. He counseled that it was necessary to seek and to find in Jesus Christ the spirit and the grace which God wished to give one, to adore Jesus Christ, to give oneself to him entirely, and to resign all that one is into his hands.

In his Trinitarian theology Bérulle wished his priests, and the nuns under his direction, to adore the Trinity three times a day: in the morning as the source of their being, at noon for continuing to support them and in the evening as the end of their being. Condren too wished his priests to adore God three times a day, but he emphasized in the daily examen the adoration of Jesus as judge, leader and priest.

In his ecclesiology, Condren emphasized the Church as the Body of Christ and insisted on communion with the mysteries of Christ and with his intentions. This he saw of value for all Christians but even more so for priests, particularly when they celebrated the sacrifice of the Mass.

Most historians see Jean-Jacques Olier and Jean Eudes as the authentic heirs of Charles de Condren. It was Olier who was to carry on the dream of Bérulle and Condren of renewing the state of the priesthood.

ii. Jean-Jacques Olier: (1608-1657)

Jean-Jacques Olier may have come in contact with Bérullian spirituality first through Vincent de Paul, who directed him from the years 1632-1635, and then through Charles Condren, who directed him from

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60 Deville, 59. "Le moyen de continuer dans tous les siècles le même sacrifice et de multiplier chaque jour son offrande sur ses autels." Cf. Cochois, 128.
61 Deville, 61.
63 Deville, 61.
64 Ibid.
65 Ibid.
Jean-Jacques Olier, contemporary of Vincent and Louise whose works reflected Bérullian spirituality.

1635-1641. He was deeply imbued with Bérullian spirituality. It seems uncontested that Olier was one of the best apostles to bring Bérullian thought within the grasp of most readers. It was during the years 1655-1657 that Olier published his spiritual works, which contained his essential thoughts on the Christian life. He died Easter Monday, 2 April 1657, comforted by a last visit of Vincent de Paul.

To Bérullian spirituality, Olier brought his own nuances. In his theocentric and Trinitarian thought, Olier saw God as communicative and imaged Him as fire.

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66 Olier worked closely with Saint Vincent de Paul in giving parish missions. Olier began preaching these in 1634 in the parishes near his Abbey of Pébrac (DS, XI, 737). Vincent, a close associate and directee of Bérulle may have passed on to Olier some Bérullian influence along with his own unique Vincentian flavor. Vincent de Paul and Olier remained lifelong associates and friends.

It was Mère Agnès of Jésus, prioress of a monastery of Dominican nuns, who directed Olier to Père de Condren and revealed to him that “Dieu l'avait destiné à jeter les premiers fondements des séminaires du Royaume de France.” Deville, 67. It is of note that Mère Agnès was beatified in Rome, on 20 November 1994, and her feast will be celebrated on 19 October.

67 Deville, 64; Cognet, 96; Pourrat, 360.


69 Ibid.

70 *CWS: Bérulle*, 34: “God has formed human society upon the model of the society of persons in the most holy Trinity.” As the divine persons love one another, so “God wants each to love one’s neighbor as oneself.” “O my God you have appeared like fire.”
Like Bérulle, Olier’s spirituality was primarily Christocentric. This was epitomized by his vow of servitude to Jesus Christ in 1641 and his vow of host-victim in 1643. Olier, too, saw the Incarnation as the prolongation of the Trinity but spoke of the “heart” or “interior” of Jesus rather than the “état” of Bérulle. Olier saw the Incarnation as the summit of revelation and thought, and that the humanity of Jesus must flow through us so that we might participate in his life. Olier experienced and fostered a unitive style of mysticism culminating in the nuptial relationship. He wrote: “As God conquers self-love in our soul, one is placed into a true ecstasy and becomes a spouse of God.” In stressing the interior of Jesus, the French School came to dwell upon the loving heart of Jesus and “the more it meditated upon the mystery of the Incarnation, the more it moved towards love as the ‘deep grammar’ of it all.”

To the Mariological aspect of French Spirituality, Olier contributed a nuance in seeing Mary as a sacrament and avenue to Jesus. He rooted his Mariology in Christology and Soteriology. Like Bérulle, he saw Mary’s greatness as rooted in her relationship to Jesus; but whereas Bérulle saw Mary’s “Fiat” as servitude, Olier saw it as humility and praise. Olier contemplated particularly the maternity of Mary and echoed Bérulle in calling her the “Father’s Spouse,” thus seeking correspondence between Mary’s maternity and God’s paternity. His greatest expression of Mary’s maternity is in his prayer, “O Jesus living in Mary, come and live in me, ....”

Olier’s ecclesiology is characterized by its Christological orientation. For Olier the Church is the Mystical Body through which Jesus has willed to “dilate and expand his Spirit.” The Spirit spreads “in all

71 Noye et Dupuy, DS, XI, 742.
72 CWS: Bérulle, Olier cited by Thompson, 45.
73 CWS: Bérulle, 38.
74 In speaking of Mary as a sacrament, Olier wrote:

Jesus-Christ is, the sacrament [of the altar], risen and filled with glory; and even though he is in a sacrament of goodness and mercy, he also exercises judgments by his condemnations... Thus we must go to a sacrament which is pure mercy, where Jesus-Christ exercises no judgment, and this sacrament is the most holy Virgin, through whom we can confidently have access to Jesus.

Jean-Jacques Olier, Cat, 59; Lettre 340, 2, 234, as cited by Thompson in CWS: Bérulle, 51.
75 Noye et Dupuy, DS, XI, 745.
77 CWS: Bérulle, 38. Cf. Deville, 68. This prayer was derived from Condren but was expanded by Olier and was published in his Journée chrétienne.
the Church what Jesus’ heart renders to the Father. Our hearts are
echoes of the harmonies rendered to God by Jesus’ heart.”78 Again the
heart or love language appears.

In his understanding of the term “religion,” Olier combines some­
thing of Bérulle’s Christocentricism, Condren’s sacrificial imagery and
his own sense of God’s desire to enter into mystical union with us
through the Church. For Olier, religion consists in respect and love.79
It is through the love of Jesus that his kingdom brings about the state
of religion.

Like Bérulle, Olier concentrated, both theologically and pastorally,
on the priesthood and the Eucharist. He saw the priesthood as a spe­
cial expression of all the faithful and priests [ordained], who because
of their explicit and public profession were especially obliged to con­
tinual sacrifice. Olier endeavored to present an equilibrium between
the faithful and the priest, thus avoiding abuses of clerical arrogance.
His great contribution to ecclesial reform was his role in the founda­
tion of seminaries, the formation of priests, and the formulation of cri­
teria for the authentic priestly vocation which emphasized the requisite
necessary spirituality.80

Olier’s Eucharistic devotion and spirituality emphasized devotion
to the Blessed Sacrament. He stressed the Eucharist as “a dilation of
the holy mystery of the Incarnation” and expressed eucharistic com­
munion as “a marriage of Our Lord with the soul.”81

Michel Dupuy, in Dictionnaire du Grand Siècle, says that Olier was
more a “man of fire” than nuances, more pastor than thinker. He also
asserts that Olier proposes in a living manner the best adaptation of
Bérulle’s thought.82

iii. Saint Jean Eudes: (1601 - 1680)

A third contributor to the development of the French School of
Spirituality was Saint Jean Eudes. In Bérullian tradition, Eudes, in his
theocentric Trinitarianism, saw God as love and stressed the divine
persons of the Trinity sharing this love among themselves and imprinting

78 CWS: Bérulle, 60-61.
81 CWS: Bérulle, 63. Here again we see the “nuptial imagery of mysticism” in Olier’s
writings.
82 Michel Dupuy, “Jean-Jacques Olier,” Dictionnaire du Grand Siècle, sous la direc­
tion de François Bluche (Paris: Fayard, 1990), 1115. Hereinafter cited as DGS.
it upon humans, particularly through baptism.\textsuperscript{83}

In his Christology, Eudes' devotion to the hearts of Jesus and Mary was founded on his Incarnational Christology. He centered his spirituality on the hearts of Jesus and Mary as the principal signs of love: the heart of Mary was where the Christian contemplated Jesus himself; the heart of Jesus manifested the love of God for all his creatures. Eudes tended to use biblical Pauline language and emphasized the term "devotion" of Francis de Sales rather than the term "religion" of Bérulle.\textsuperscript{84} Jean Eudes called for a form of love which was free from all clinging and attachment, even to devotions. He counseled his followers to have no attachment to any practice or devotion, but to surrender themselves in everything to the Holy Spirit of Jesus.\textsuperscript{85}

Jean Eudes' Mariology which centered on the heart theology of Mary, is grounded on the Trinity -- in the heart of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.\textsuperscript{86} Perhaps even more than Bérulle, Eudes accentuated the Christological aspect of his Mariology. Mary is what she is because of Jesus and thus a study of her heart becomes a study of the heart of Jesus.\textsuperscript{87} Eudes differentiated the heart into the corporeal, spiritual and divine heart. These three hearts of Mary are but one because, except for the hypostatic union, there could never be a closer union.\textsuperscript{88} Like Bérulle, Eudes grounded his Mariology in Mary's divine maternity.

In keeping with the French School, Eudes was ecclesially and pastorally oriented. He was strongly devoted to the renewal of the Church through the renewal of the clergy.\textsuperscript{89} Eudes saw Jesus Christ as the supreme priest in whose priesthood both clergy and laity participate. He encouraged the laity not only to assist at Mass but to join with the priest in its celebration. Eudes' ecclesiology is Christological and biblical. All Christians are one with Jesus Christ their head, sharing all his qualities. Characteristic of the French School, Eudes avoided any

\textsuperscript{83} CWS: Bérulle, 35.
\textsuperscript{84} Ibid. Cf. Molien, DS, I, 1574.
\textsuperscript{85} CWS: Bérulle, 45.
\textsuperscript{86} CWS: Bérulle, 34: "three persons in the adorable mystery of the Trinity are but one heart" (35). Cf. Pourrat, III, 399.
\textsuperscript{87} CWS: Bérulle, 52. Cf. Deville, 96.
\textsuperscript{88} CWS: Bérulle, 53. Because of the union between God and Mary, the Divine (divine heart) has transformed the complete being of Mary, bodily (the corporeal heart) and spiritually (the spiritual heart).
\textsuperscript{89} To this end Eudes established seminaries which led to his break with the Oratorians and the foundation of his own Congregation of Jesus and Mary which would become the Eudists. Cf. Deville, 94.
hint of clericalism. On the pastoral level Eudes emphasized the salvation of souls as the greatest obligation of the ecclesiastic. For this, priests must be animated by the Spirit in order to preach the gospel and work for the salvation of souls. 90

In 1648, Jean Eudes celebrated the first public liturgy in honor of the heart of Mary, and in 1672 several bishops approved the office and Mass which he composed in honor of the heart of Jesus. 91 After Eudes left the Oratorians, his life and his congregation came under severe scrutiny. Following his death, Eudes was criticized by the Jansenists, and it was not until the twentieth century that he began to receive his just due. He was beatified by Pope Pius X in 1909, and canonized by Pope Pius XI in 1925. 92 At his beatification, Pope Pius X called him "the father, doctor and apostle of the liturgical cult of the hearts of Jesus and Mary." 93 To Jean Eudes, Catholic Spirituality owes its heart theology of Jesus and Mary.

iv. Other Significant Contributors

In this study of the French School of Spirituality it is important, from the perspective of this writer, to look at two other prominent figures on the French scene at this time. One is Saint Francis de Sales and the other is Saint Vincent de Paul. Both of these saints were connected with Béroule, with the French Spirituality milieu, and with each other. Both made an inestimable contribution to spiritual renewal in France and the legacy of both has endured throughout these past three hundred plus years. In addition to these two men, recognition must be given to the women who influenced the spirituality of the time, either directly through their own writings and works, or indirectly through their influence on the men who have been designated as the "fathers" of the French School of Spirituality.

a. Saint Francis de Sales: (1567 - 1622)

Although not from France, and thus not considered to belong to the French School of Spirituality, it is without doubt that Saint Francis de Sales exerted a great influence on the recognized members of the French School, and indeed upon countless people of every social standing within French society at this time. This influence was not only...
through his preaching and personal direction, but especially through his books *L’Introduction à la vie dévote* (Introduction to the Devout Life), 1609, and *Le Traité de l’Amour de Dieu* (Treatise on the Love of God), 1614, both of which were written as a means of directing souls in their pursuit of God.\(^94\) Francis believed that Christian perfection was for all people and not only for those in cloisters.

During his priestly ministry, Francis de Sales made three sojourns to France: 1602, 1604 and 1618. In 1602 he spent from January-September in Paris, during which time he preached, became associated with Bérulle and with Madame Acarie’s circle, and was deeply influenced by the amazing spiritual renewal developing in Paris.\(^95\)

Francis de Sales also greatly influenced Pierre de Bérulle. Of their meeting in January of 1602, Houssaye states that “saints recognize one another quickly; they are of the same house.”\(^96\) Further he says: “From this mutual esteem, from this religious friendship was born a reciprocal confidence.”\(^97\) Bérulle immediately introduced Francis de Sales to Madame Acarie and her circle, wherein both would have enjoyed the atmosphere of prayer and the vibrant religious discussions. Francis became Madame Acarie’s confessor while in Paris, and during his six-month stay in 1602 he visited her every two days.\(^98\) The relationship between Francis and Bérulle grew and developed throughout their twenty-year association. Before founding the Oratory in 1611, Bérulle consulted Francis de Sales and even invited him to be part of it.\(^99\) Both recognized the holiness of the other and both desired to follow the will of God in all things. Each however, had his own gift to give to the Church. Francis’ focus was to bring holiness within the reach of all people according to their station in life. Bérulle’s focus was concentrated more on the holiness of the priest, who in turn was to shepherd his flock.

That Francis de Sales was involved with the initiators of the French School, and in turn influenced them, cannot be disputed. Had he not been a “Savoian” he might very well be numbered among the Fathers of the French School of Spirituality. He was a renowned preacher in

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\(^{94}\) Both of these books have undergone numerous publications in many languages and are still being republished today.

\(^{95}\) Raymond Darricau, “François de Sales,” *DGS*, 619.


\(^{97}\) Houssaye, I, 249.

\(^{98}\) Houssaye, I, 246-247.

\(^{99}\) Houssaye, II, 237.
Paris and the elite flocked to hear him.\(^{100}\) His spirituality was certainly Christocentric, ecclesial, and pastoral, and the degree to which he influenced Bérulle cannot be underestimated; nor can that of Madame Acarie and Bérulle upon Francis.

Francis de Sales died 28 December 1622 leaving a strong impact upon those whose lives he touched. Of the contemporaries of the French School he influenced, in particular, Vincent de Paul and Olier. The nuance he contributed to French spirituality was his more positive concept of human nature, which being wounded by original sin maintained a virtuous orientation towards God, its final supernatural end. For Francis, humans cooperated with grace in their good works and especially in their own salvation.\(^{101}\) He believed in the potential for human perfection but de-emphasized any zealous quest for it.\(^{102}\) However, one must endeavor to discern and conform oneself to the will of God and be ready to abandon oneself to God’s will in the situations of daily life.\(^{103}\) Being attuned to the will of God and conforming oneself to it was a main tenet of Francis de Sales’ spirituality.\(^{104}\) To achieve this there must be an inner attentiveness to the voice of God in one’s heart.

Ravier posits that the main idea of the spirituality of Francis de Sales is “God is God of the human heart;” and “The human heart is made in the image and likeness of the heart of God.” God is love; hence, if one wishes to live spiritually, it is necessary to live in love and everything must be “of love, by love, for love.”\(^{105}\)

For Francis, love of God and love of neighbor are inseparable, “but it is the love of God which engenders love of neighbor, and which leads to its accomplishment.”\(^{106}\) To die for others is to live with them.

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\(^{100}\) Dirvin, 36.

\(^{101}\) Darricau, DGS, 621.


\(^{103}\) Francis, Jane: Letters, 74.

\(^{104}\) Elisabeth Stopp in “François de Sales,” Study of Spirituality, 384, states:

François’ most illuminating achievement is perhaps to have made a clear and convincing distinction between the role of the feelings and that of the will in our love of God and of our neighbour, to have taught people how to distinguish between God and their awareness (or non-awareness) of him... There is the basic set of the will towards God; there is the surface sensation of revolt, doubt, misery, fear.


\(^{106}\) Ibid.
and for them, to live love of neighbor and love of God as Christ lived it.\textsuperscript{107} Francis spoke of exercising love for God through affection for God and what he loves (affective), and by serving God in doing what He ordains (effective). "The first joins us to God's goodness; the second enables us to fulfill his will."\textsuperscript{108} Francis' description of "devotion" also embodies these aspects of love. He wrote:

Devotion consists in a certain degree of eminent charity, it not only makes us prompt, active and faithful in observance of God's commands, but in addition it arouses us to do quickly and lovingly as many good works as possible... charity and devotion differ no more from one another than does flame from the fire. Charity is spiritual fire and when it bursts into flames, it is called devotion.\textsuperscript{109}

For Francis, "'devotion' that is, real holiness, was something attainable by all who were willing to put their heart and mind to it."\textsuperscript{110}

Francis de Sales also speaks of prayer in terms of love. He describes meditation as "thinking upon the things of God to acquire affection for them;"\textsuperscript{111} and he speaks of contemplation as a "loving attention" aroused by this love. He says: "In summary, meditation is the mother of love but contemplation is its daughter."\textsuperscript{112}

Through his life, his preaching and his writings, Saint Francis de Sales presented the life of spirituality, the way of love, as possible for all. His positive attitude towards human nature, his spirit of joy, his

\textsuperscript{107} Hélène Bordes, "Le Christ de François de Sales," \textit{Vincentiana} XXX, 3-4 (1986): 269. 254: "The only perfect image of God is Christ, the perfect man, the perfection of creation, who lived the excellence of love for the Father and for the neighbor and whom humans are called to imitate."


\textsuperscript{110} Elisabeth Stopp, "François de Sales," \textit{The Study of Spirituality}, 380.

\textsuperscript{111} Francis de Sales, \textit{Treatise}, I, 272. Herein, Francis says all meditation is thought but all thought is not meditation.

\textsuperscript{112} Francis de Sales, \textit{Treatise}, I, 276. It would appear that the "contemplation" to which Francis is referring here is that termed by some spiritual writers as "acquired recollection." Francis does describe the "Simple gaze of contemplation" (283) and then later discusses "loving recollection of contemplation which is not within our power to have it, nor does it depend on our efforts. At his own pleasure God works it in us by his most holy grace" (286). Cf. Aumann, \textit{Spiritual Theology}, 327, 330ff.
flexibility and the moderation in his spiritual counsels made his teaching appealing to all.\textsuperscript{113} Citing Elisabeth Stopp:

   His teaching was simple and yet totally comprehensive: holiness, that is, 'devotion,' is for all; love holds absolute primacy and is the way; Jesus Christ, meek and humble of heart, is the model and the way.\textsuperscript{114}

Among Francis' greatest admirers was Vincent de Paul, who made a deposition on his virtues and "petitioned Pope Alexander VII for his friend's Beatification."\textsuperscript{115}

b. Saint Vincent de Paul: (1581 - 1660)

That Saint Vincent de Paul was in the mainstream of the French School cannot be disputed.\textsuperscript{116} He was the directee of Béruelle; he was the director of Olier and Eudes; he was friend and associate of Francis de Sales and chosen by him to be the Superior of his Visitation Convents.\textsuperscript{117} Vincent shared the basic characteristics of the French School of Spirituality, bringing to them his own expression in the apostolate of charity and service to the poor -- a service that was to be expressed in both the spiritual and corporal dimensions of charity. Underlying this active apostolate was prayer and union with God. Vincent was

\textsuperscript{113} DS, V, 932. The great Salesian scholar, Lebrun, asserts that all the great spirituals of the Seventeenth Century were in one way or another the disciples of Francis de Sales, especially through his spirit which did not impose adherence to a system.

\textsuperscript{114} Elisabeth Stopp, "François de Sales," \textit{The Study of Spirituality}, 382.


\textsuperscript{116} Molien in \textit{Dictionnaire de Spiritualité}, I, 1574, states that one of the glories of Béruelle and of his school is to count Vincent de Paul among its most authentic representatives. He continues that the canonization of Saint Vincent de Paul and Saint Jean Eudes is the glorification by the Church of the founder of the Oratory, Béruelle.

Coste posits that Vincent de Paul resembles de Bérulle and Saint Francis de Sales, but made their teachings his own, imprinting them with his own mark of tending towards action. Coste, \textit{Life & Works}, III, 355-356.

\textsuperscript{117} In 1622, the Bishop of Paris, Cardinal de Retz accepted the nomination by Jane de Chantal and Francis de Sales to appoint Vincent de Paul to be his representative as legitimate Superior of the Visitation nuns. Vincent held this position until his death in 1660. Coste, \textit{Life & Works}, I, 136.
truly a contemplative in action. Even a cursory look at the spirituality of Saint Vincent de Paul reveals the hues of the French school.

Vincent’s Trinitarian theocentricism was expressed in his constant desire to do the Will of God, his complete trust in the Providence of God, his sensitivity to the Spirit and his imitation of Jesus. For Vincent, belief in the mystery of the holy Trinity was necessary for salvation, and he found and knew “his Christ” only in the union of the Son with the Father. That the Trinity was central for Vincent is seen in his placing his Congregation under the patronage of the Trinity and his frequent reference to the unity of the Trinity as the best model for a life of unity within Community.

From within the Trinity, Christ was the foundational focus of Vincent’s active spirituality, hence its Christocentricism. In Jesus Christ, Vincent saw the Savior come to do the Father’s Will, which He accomplished through His self-emptying service to the poor and the salvation of all through His death on the cross. This mission of Christ

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119 Georges Viard in DGS, 1609, states that Vincent de Paul followed in the footsteps of Bérulle and Francis de Sales. Bérulle taught him to contemplate the Word Incarnate in all the aspects of his suffering and Francis de Sales taught him that Jesus Christ was the only model possible. Regarding this aspect of Vincent, André Dodin, C.M., states: “On the otherhand, whatever his attitude was when he quoted Bérulle, imitated Francis de Sales and made their images and thoughts his own, he always remained an independent person.” Dodin continues: “While adopting their offerings, he adapted them and often transformed them. His originality was not in matters of doctrine, but in life and in experience.” André Dodin, C.M., Vincent de Paul and Charity, A Contemporary Portrait of His Life and Apostolic Spirit, trans. Jean Marie Smith and Dennis Saunders, ed. Hugh O’Donnell, C.M., and Marjorie Gale Hornstein (New York: New City Press, 1992), 52. Hereinafter cited as Vincent de Paul and Charity.


121 Jean Morin, C.M., states that the fundamental trait of Vincent’s faith was an adherence to Jesus Christ: “Nous avons trouvé là (Jesus-Christ envoyé pour évangéliser les pauvres) certainement, le trait fondamental de la foi de saint Vincent: une adhésion à Jésus-Christ envoyé aux pauvres!” “La Foi de Saint Vincent,” Au temps de St. Vincent de Paul… et aujourd’hui, Carnet Vincentiens (Toulouse: Animation Vincentienne, 1991), 3, 10. Hereinafter cited as Carnet Vincentiens.

the evangelizer fulfilling the Father’s Will, was for Vincent, the begin­ning, the direction, and the end of his spirituality concretized in deeds of charity and justice. Dodin writes:

The Christ whom Vincent contemplated and adored is not a representation of an eternal truth, but a living human being united with humankind in history, on a mission from his Father to save humanity.123

The primacy of Christ for Vincent is epitomized in his words to his Community: “Jesus Christ is the rule of the Mission.”124

In Vincent’s ecclesiology the mystical body of Christ was predomi­nant. For him, the poor Christ was present in the poor, and the poor were present in Christ. The poor were the sacrament, the sign of Christ’s presence, who in his Incarnation, his public life and his passion, took on the reality of the suffering poor. It was to the poor that Jesus had come to bring the good news and to minister.125 This too was Vincent’s call. For him service to the poor was similar in value to prayer and adoration of God. He counseled the Daughters not to be afraid “to leave God for God:” “If you must leave prayer to attend the sick, leave it, and as you leave God in prayer, you will find Him with the sick.”126 For Vincent it was essential to give oneself to God, to surrender to God for His service.

Clergy reform and education were also paramount for Vincent because it was primarily through priests that the people of God, especially the poor in the outlying areas would be evangelized and catechized.127 From this zeal came the foundation of the Congregation of the Mission, perhaps the first group in the Church to be founded

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123 Dodin, Vincent de Paul and Charity, 56.
127 Morin posits that Vincent de Paul helped to make the Church, la ville des Pauvres, by his influence on the clergy and laity through his Tuesday Conferences for priests, the seminaries, and his ten years on the Counsel of Conscience which named Bishops. Carnet Vincentiens, 3, 13.
specifically for preaching parish missions to the poor. Vincent’s life work attests to the strong orientation of the ecclesial and pastoral dimension of his spirituality.

The mariological aspect of the French School was also evident in Vincent’s spirituality. Coste states:

After Jesus, Vincent chiefly turned to Mary, whom he honored in a thousand different ways by frequent prayers, such as the Rosary, the Angelus, the prayer Sancta Maria or the Sub tuum at the end of each devotional exercise, the solemnity with which her feasts were celebrated, ...his fasting on the vigils, ...the pilgrimages to her shrines, ...the advice which he gave in his rules both for Missionaries and Sisters, to cultivate a special devotion to the Mother of God, and lastly the choice he made of her as patroness of the Confraternities of Charity.

Coste further notes: “He always wore a rosary at his girdle as an external mark of his devotion to the Blessed Virgin, and as a declaration that he was her faithful servant.”

In his direction of Saint Louise de Marillac, Vincent often counseled her to have recourse to the Blessed Virgin, and this in the context of her motherhood.

Pourrat, in Christian Spirituality, speaks of the spirituality of Saint Vincent de Paul as Berullian and also wholly practical, directed always towards action. Vincent looked at feelings as stimulants to the performance of duty. He said: “Let us love God, my brethren, let us love God, but let this be at the expense of our arms, and in the sweat of our

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128 He (Vincent) founded the Congregation of the Mission (1625), a community of priests and brothers whose end is “to preach the good news to the poor.” Robert Maloney, C.M., The Way of Vincent de Paul, 12. It is of note that, like the Daughters of Charity after them, this Congregation was not a religious order.
129 Coste, Life & Works, III, 305.
130 Ibid., 337.
131 CED, I, 351: “...be as lighthearted as you can in union with the cheerfulness of the Blessed Virgin in similar circumstances.”
329: “Oh! Would that we be given a share in the holy Virgin’s disposition at the death of her Son! I am going to ask a share in them for you at the holy altar.”
109: “Oh! Our Lord most certainly did well not to choose you for His Mother, since you do not think you can discern the Will of God in the maternal care He dreams of you for your son... Honor, therefore, the tranquillity of the Blessed Virgin in such a case.”
brows."\textsuperscript{132} Inspired by its leaders, and in varying degrees exhibiting the tenets of the French School of Spirituality, Vincent de Paul contributed to this age and thereafter the gift of his own particular spirituality. Pourrat expressed it thus:

The spirituality of Saint Vincent de Paul is entirely ‘informed’ by charity towards one’s neighbour and zeal for the salvation of souls. This charity is his dominant virtue. All his teaching is inspired by it.\textsuperscript{133}

c. The Women

In studying the Spirituality of the French School it is impossible not to be aware of the influence of the women of the period, both on the development of the spirituality and on the men who are proclaimed as the “fathers” of the School. It is not within the scope of this study to present an overview of the “mothers” of the School, but it is essential to indicate those women who were particularly influential in the lives and spiritual development of the men mentioned above.\textsuperscript{134}

Even a perusal of Béroulle’s works and spirituality will show the immediate influence of Madame Acarie, Madeleine of Saint Joseph and Mother Ann of Jesus, plus that of Teresa of Avila and Catherine of Genoa. It was Catherine de Jésus whom he consulted who told him: “The way which God chose for you to announce his Son and his mysteries is principally that of the written word.”\textsuperscript{135} Mère Madeleine de Saint Joseph was an intimate confidante of Béroulle who encouraged his founding of the Oratory, influenced the evolution of his theological thought, untiringly defended his spirituality and worked to extend it in the Carmels in order to lessen the influence of the abstract school.\textsuperscript{136} Thompson suggests that because of her important influence on the Paris Carmel as prioress and its critical role in the spiritual renewal of France, her contribution to the French School through her theology of love, and her influence on Béroulle’s thought, Mère Madeleine deserves to be considered as one of the great initiators and even the foundress of the

\textsuperscript{133} Pourrat, 393.
\textsuperscript{135} Molien, \textit{DS}, I, 1541.
\textsuperscript{136} \textit{CWS: Béroulle}, 22, 23.
Jean-Jacques Olier’s spirituality and work was influenced by several women. In 1634, Mère Agnes de Langeac confirmed his call to found seminaries. From 1638 Olier became a close friend of Marie Rousseau, who helped him through his dark night (1639-41) and in his seminary reform work. Mère de Bressand and Marguerite de Saint-Sacrement also played important roles in Olier’s life.

Saint Jean Eudes was inspired by Marie des Valleés, whom he saw as a woman of profound holiness and from whom he derived much comfort. From 1641-1656 he helped her, and was greatly helped by her, but suffered much from others because of his relationship with her. Jean Eudes was also deeply impressed by Marguerite de Saint-Sacrement’s holiness and her devotion to the infancy of Jesus.

History is well aware of the deep relationship between Saint Francis de Sales and Saint Jane de Chantal. The founding of the Visitation of Holy Mary in Annecy, Savoy in 1610 (Visitation Sisters) was the cooperative initiative of Francis de Sales and Jane de Chantal. The friendship between Francis and Jane which began in 1604, “blossomed into a union of immense richness that led them individually and together to their full spiritual potential.” It is mainly to Jane de Chantal that Francis owed his schooling in the contemplative life. In 1616, “still joined in their mutual quest to seek God they ‘let each other go,’ releasing the other to depend utterly on God alone.” After Francis’ death in 1622, Jane de Chantal continued to oversee her religious foundations, and for the remainder of her life, endeavored to ensure the “survival, both institutional and spiritual, of the Salesian charism in its manifestation as the order of the Visitation.”

Perhaps less known, but no less important to the annals of spirituality, and perhaps even more so to the active apostolate of the Church,
was the relationship between Saint Vincent de Paul and Saint Louise de Marillac. To the memory of their deep love for God and neighbor is the providential foundation of the Daughters of Charity, who since 1633 have been synonymous with the apostolate of charitable works. Saint Louise’s inspirational influence and cooperation with Saint Vincent de Paul in the foundation and spiritual formation of this group of women was most impressive. Joined in heart and hand, Louise and Vincent supported, encouraged and challenged one another on the path to holiness during a relationship which endured for nearly thirty-five years.

Other women also inspired and encouraged Saint Vincent de Paul, both in his spiritual life and in his apostolic works. Among these were Saint Jane de Chantal, with whom Vincent was associated and directed for many years; Madame de Gondi, who was inspired by God to persuade Vincent to establish the Congregation of the Mission; and Madame Goussault, who was instrumental in his founding of the Confraternity of the Hôtel-Dieu in 1634 to care for the spiritual needs of the patients of the great hospital.

1.2.5 Language of the French School of Spirituality

One final point in this synopsis deals with the grammar of the French School.

Jean Ladrière, in *Dictionnaire de Spiritualité*, posits that the language of spirituality is “une forme du langage de la foi” which is a language of proclamation, of liturgy, of preaching and of theology. Furthermore, he contends that fundamentally this language relates to a personal experience of faith, of union with God, expressing how it was experienced, and thus having the language become a means of witness.

It is not within the scope of this study to undertake an in-depth study of the language of the French School of Spirituality, but even a cursory reading of the various texts of the major writers will show that the above qualities are evident.

147 Coste, *Life & Works*, I, 139. It is of note that the death of Jane de Chantal was revealed to Vincent in a vision depicting three globes: a small globe of fire which rose from the earth to rejoin in the upper regions of the air with a larger more luminous globe; both of them united together rose higher and entered a still larger and more luminous globe. He was told interiorly that the first globe was the soul of our worthy Mother, the second that of our Blessed Father, and the third, the Divine Essence (142).


Ladrière also states that the language of spirituality includes a teaching aspect which gives counsel, suggests methods, indicates a way to follow, describes the stages of passage, and teaches one to orientate oneself in the spiritual life through the witness of a particular experience.\textsuperscript{151} This is evident in the seminary training undertaken by Olier and Saint Vincent de Paul, and is manifested clearly in the writings of Saint Francis de Sales, especially in \textit{Introduction to the Devout Life}, which was such a popular handbook of spirituality in Paris at this time.

In discussing the various characteristics of the language of spirituality, Ladrière proposes that the descriptive aspect ranges from a simple "\textit{évocation de la foi}," which expresses how one understands the faith, to a description of "\textit{l’expérience mystique}," in which the soul lives, in a manner accessible to the conscience, in a more or less intense state of union with God under the action of grace. Such an experience, he says, is essentially subjective and interior, but can be manifested exteriorly in the senses, or in acts of charity or apostolic works which are secondary to the interior experience of God.\textsuperscript{152} Examples of this phenomenon are found in the lives of such persons as Bérulle, Saint Vincent de Paul, Olier, Saint Jean Eudes and Saint Louise de Marillac.

Pursuing other aspects of the language of spirituality, Ladrière sees it as a language of poetry utilizing context, allegory and symbols to present its message of faith. In the French School of Spirituality such would be found in the Magdala image of Bérulle and the heart images of Saint Jean Eudes.\textsuperscript{153}

Ladrière also maintains that the language of a certain time, culture or tradition has a common structure in describing the experiences. This too is evident in the French School of Spirituality which has its own framework of descriptive vocabulary characteristic of its time and theology. Within their writings one finds the repetitions of such terms as: religion, adoration, elevation, surrender, annihilation — (anéantissement) — nothingness, servitude, Mystical Body, heart symbolism, maternity of Mary, état or state, adherence to the will of God and devotion. In varying degrees such vocabulary is related to an interior experience of faith and is utilized to witness to or to proclaim

\textsuperscript{151} Ladrière, \textit{DS}, IX, 205.
\textsuperscript{152} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{153} The heart images of Eudes have already been mentioned. The "Magdala image" of Bérulle refers to Mary Magdalene who was a main 17th Century symbolic model of the Christian's relationship with Christ. Bérulle wrote a lengthy elevation to Saint Mary Magdalene extolling the most favored love that Jesus bestowed upon her. Cf. CWS: Bérulle, 172-182.
that reality to others as a universal.

Hence the language of spirituality, as a means of communicating faith, cannot be isolated from the context in which it originated, whether that be the life or the tradition of its authors. Yet, in its creative power as sign it transports the message through the ages.

1.3 Summary

In concluding this overview of the French School of Spirituality it is sufficient to highlight the main characteristics of the school and the language peculiar to it.

In describing a school of spirituality, Deville posits that a spirituality or spiritual tradition is a certain manner of hearing and living the Gospel. This is conditioned by a time, a milieu, and some influential principles. This particular way of hearing and living the gospel is incarnated in a group of people and prolonged through history, enriching or impoverishing itself. Such a spiritual tradition may be termed a school of spirituality. Deville suggests the following five characteristics which determine a school of spirituality: i. Each school has certain aspects of the faith and life in the Spirit which it emphasizes; ii. It is distinguished by a certain manner of prayer and a certain approach to mission; iii. It always has its own elements of pedagogy which consist in practices aimed at nourishing the spirituality; iv. The school has its own preferred biblical texts; v. The school is rooted in a very strong spiritual experience.

It is now possible to present a brief recapitulation of the French School of Spirituality using these five principles.

i. The four basic aspects of faith and life in the Spirit, with given nuances as discussed above are: Theocentric Trinitarianism, Christocentricism, Marian, Pastoral and Ecclesial accents.

ii. In prayer, the founders and foundresses of the French School were identified as mystics. Their followers also would be considered

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\[154\] It is essential to recall that the French School of Spirituality is the term applied to the doctrine of spirituality developed in France during the Seventeenth Century. In the strict sense it is limited to the disciples of Bérulle who had an awareness of his originality and who followed the themes characteristic of his doctrine.

\[155\] Deville, 102.

\[156\] Ibid., 13. Citing P. Cochois, Deville states the following characteristics of Bérulle for the French School: “l'esprit de religion de son théocentrisme, son christocentrisme mystique, son sens vécu de la souveraineté de la Mère de Dieu et son exaltation de l'état de prétise.”
to be contemplatives with some moving into the contemplative in action tradition. Most notable in this genre would be Saint Vincent de Paul. Regarding mission, it could be said that they had a strong ecclesial and pastoral orientation to mission, expressed by all in their concern for priestly reform, and by some in their concentrated concern for the spiritual and corporal needs of the poor.

iii. In its pedagogy and practices to express and to nourish its spirituality, the French School could be said to emphasize the sacraments of Baptism, Eucharist and Penance. In its living out of the gospel, it expressed a strong imitation of Jesus and Mary, both in their external conduct and in their internal states of soul. In imitation of the “self-emptying” of Jesus, one was called to enter into oneself, to die to one’s false self and to share in the state of adoration of God with Jesus. Through Jesus one was called to enter into union with the Trinity. These processes were manifested in the prayers of surrender and dedication, the vows of servitude, and the prayers of elevation.¹⁵⁷ In speaking of the pedagogy of the French School, Deville mentions the five following principles: the prayer of the Church (Liturgy), initiation into methods of prayer, the Cult of the Word and the Eucharist, spiritual direction and the vows of servitude. All had the aim of assisting one to answer the call of the Lord, of surrendering to the Spirit, of adhering to Jesus, of serving the neighbor and of desiring to die to one’s false self.¹⁵⁸

iv. The scriptural basis of this spirituality is found primarily in Saint Paul and Saint John, with emphasis on baptism, death and resurrection, dying to the old self, the Mystical Body, the sacrificial priesthood of Jesus and the operation of the Holy Spirit. Deville posits that the words of Saint Paul in Galatians 2:20, “It is no longer I who live but it is Christ who lives in me,” is the leit-motif of the spiritual doctrine of the French School and that their primary prayer is that of the early Christians, “Come Lord Jesus; Come and live in us.”¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁷ The “vows of servitude” and “prayers of elevation” were particularly identified with Bérulle and the Carmelite nuns. The vows of servitude to Jesus and Mary were, according to Bérulle, “a prolongation of the baptismal vows” in which the Christian is marked by the radical servitude of Christ which in some way ‘Christiforms’ one’s own existence” (CWS: Bérulle, 15, 41).

¹⁵⁸ For a fuller treatment of these aspects see: Deville, 118-123.

¹⁵⁹ Deville, 107.
v. The original spiritual experience that would typify the French School was the experience of Jesus Christ, the Incarnate Word of God. This was fundamental to the reunion of spirituality and theology which Béruelle stressed, and was central to all the ensuing doctrine of the school and its lived-out experience.

2.0 Saint Louise de Marillac in Relation to the French School of Spirituality

2.1 Introduction

Having summarized briefly the French School of Spirituality in light of its main contributors and its main characteristics, we now look at both in relation to the spirituality of Saint Louise de Marillac.

It is impossible to separate one’s spirituality from one’s personal life situation, milieu and epoch. Hence the spiritual environment in which Louise lived certainly influenced her spiritual development.

Before illustrating that the basic characteristics of the French School of Spirituality are evident in Saint Louise’s writings and lived experience, we shall note the more significant persons mentioned in her correspondence and spiritual writings who had an impact upon her spiritual life. Prior to her becoming the directee of Vincent de Paul in 1625, the main persons who are recorded in Louise’s correspondence and writings are: Michel de Marillac, Bishop Jean-Paul Camus and Saint Francis de Sales. These three figures seem to weave in and out of Louise’s life between the years 1618-1624, with Jean-Paul Camus, her director, being the central strand. Although the latter may not have been directly the most influential, he is the most consistently found among the early records.\(^{160}\) We shall now consider each of these men, including Cardinal de Bérulle and Vincent de Paul, in light of their association with Louise de Marillac.

2.2 Significant Influences Au Courant de Bérulle

2.2.1 Michel de Marillac:

In some ways, Michel de Marillac, uncle of Louise, fulfilled the role of both natural father and spiritual father for Louise from 1604-1624. After the death of her father in 1604, Michel was named her

Michel de Marillac. The uncle of Louise, who acted as her “father” from 1604-1624.

tutor.\textsuperscript{161} It would appear however, that he was not too diligent in the temporal affairs regarding Louise, as is evidenced in her court action against him to gain her rightful dues from her half-sister Innocente. Nevertheless Louise did consult Michel regarding the financial situation resultant from the d’Attichy estate, whose care her husband had undertaken for him, and she did seek his counsel in both family and spiritual matters. This is evidenced in letters of 1619, 1620, 1621 and 1623.\textsuperscript{162}

There appears to be no other record of their relationship, but the tenor of these letters suggests that there existed between them a relationship marked by a certain degree of trust and respect. To Louise, Michel obviously was considered the “head of the Marillac family.” In this role Louise would have consulted him on family financial matters, and even for the justification of her husband in light of a d’Attichy rebuff, but to entrust to him the pain and doubt of her soul in her relationship with God bespeaks a depth of trust beyond ordinary


\textsuperscript{162} See Charpy, \textit{Documents}, Docs. 826, 827, 828, 829, 832; 976-980.
interaction even for a family member.\textsuperscript{163}

It is known that Michel was one of the leading lay men involved in the spiritual renewal of Paris. He was personal friends with Bérulle, Camus, Francis de Sales and Madame Acarie.\textsuperscript{164} A man of prayer, he met three times a week with Madame Acarie for discussions on the way of perfection.\textsuperscript{165} With Bérulle and Madame Acarie, he was so instrumental in bringing the reformed Carmelite nuns to Paris that Madame Acarie called him the temporal founder of Carmel in France and Bérulle its spiritual father.\textsuperscript{166} Michel led the procession into Paris in 1605, and presented the nuns with the keys to their house in the name of Queen Marie de Medici and of the Duchesse de Longueville.\textsuperscript{167} Additional testimonies of Michel's leadership in the spiritual renewal in France included his assistance in establishing the Capuchin nuns (1606) and the Ursulines (1607) in Paris. He also wrote and translated spiritual books.\textsuperscript{168}

\textsuperscript{163} Calvet states that Michel "could have had an important influence on the spiritual formation of Louise, a girl of exceptional gifts. Yet there is nothing to indicate that he ever made the attempt." J. Calvet, Louise de Marillac: A Portrait, trans. G. F. Pullen (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1959), 27. Perhaps this is accurate in regard to Louise's formative years, but Michel did offer his assistance in 1623 (Doc.832 - Letter, 28 mars). There must have been some relationship in the spiritual realm to elicit Louise's confidence in him as well.

\textsuperscript{164} Houssaye, in this three-volume work on Bérulle, cites numerous references to Michel de Marillac's connection with Bérulle both in the spiritual and civil realm. Among the references are the following: 1602 — the beginning of their friendship (I, 232); 1608 — selected by Bérulle to be in charge of his diocesan collection for the Holy Places (I, 447); 1611 — presence at the first Mass of the Oratory (II, 26); 1628 — During his illness Bérulle lived in a house owned by Michel de Marillac (III, 311).

Both Calvet and Dirvin mention Michel's friendship with Camus and with Francis de Sales. From 1602, Francis de Sales was closely associated with Madame Acarie's circle and with Bérulle and hence with Michel de Marillac. Frequently in Houssaye's writings one finds three names mentioned together: Bérulle, Madame Acarie and Michel de Marillac. In his thrice-weekly visits to Madame Acarie's house, Michel undoubtedly would have met Francis de Sales. Cf. DS, I, 1539.

\textsuperscript{165} Calvet, 27.

\textsuperscript{166} Houssaye, I, 277: Elle dit à M. de Bérulle; "Vous serez le fondement de cet édifice pour le spirituel," puis, se tournant vers Michel de Marillac, elle ajoute; "Et vous pour le temporel."

\textsuperscript{167} Houssaye, I, 276.

\textsuperscript{168} Michel de Marillac (1563-1632) was a man of great spiritual depth. He worked on a treatise on eternal life while he was in the prison of Châteaudun. He also undertook a translation of The Imitation of Jesus Christ, The Psalms and The Book of Job. Louise Sullivan, D.C., ed. and trans., Spiritual Writings of Louise de Marillac: Correspondence and Thoughts (New York: New City Press, 1991), 34, note 1. Hereinafter SWLM.

Marillac's translation of The Psalms was published in Paris in 1625 by Chez Edme Martin, and his revised edition of The Imitation of Jesus-Christ was published in 1876 by Glady Frères, Éditeurs, Paris. (Archives Lazaristes, Maison-Mère, rue du Sèvres, Paris.)
At this time both he and Louise were in the Court Circles, and it would seem likely that they would share mutual friendships or at least acquaintances. Thus it is feasible that some of Louise's contacts with Francis de Sales might have been through Michel as well as through Camus. There seems to be no indication of direct contact with Bérulle, but Calvet states that Louise was "steeped in Bérullian teaching." She may have known Bérulle personally, but if not it is likely that this knowledge came through reading and discussion with others. Calvet also says that Michel was "steeped in Bérullian doctrine and preached its self-abnegation and humility to Louise in terms a little stilted but undoubtedly earnest."

Some examples of Michel's spiritual counseling to Louise are the following:

Always have good courage to seek God and to conform yourself to what pleases him and walk with humility and confidence in God....(1 June 1619)

Take patience and humble yourself before God in your shortcomings that you may have peaceful submission of your soul before God, waiting upon him for the graces which you need and do not undertake to force God to give you more graces than he wishes. Live tranquilly and humbly in the sight of your faults because it is our lot and we cannot expect anything other from ourselves....(12 September 1619)

...It is good to learn from experience that God is not attached to our designs and propositions and that souls find him particularly who seek him according to the manner that he wishes to communicate himself and not in the way that they themselves imagine to be useful and profitable...

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169 Calvet, 27.
170 Louise probably read *Bref Discours* which contained the essence of Bérulle's teaching, and she would have been exposed to the Carmelite nuns who propogated his teaching. She also likely read his treatises *L'Estat et les grandeurs de Jésus*, 1623, and *Vie de Jésus*, 1629, which crystallized his teaching on the Incarnation.
171 Viard, in *Dictionnaire du Grand Siècle*, says that Louise was nourished by the writings of Francis de Sales and Pierre de Bérulle, Benoît de Canfield and Jean-Baptiste Saint-Jure (*DGS*, 909).
172 Charpy, *Documents*, Doc. 826, 976.
173 Ibid., Doc. 827, 976.
the poor soul contents itself and submits to God and does not wish to prescribe to him the manner in which he will lead her. She receives what comes, uses all with humility, gratitude and profit and remains always poor within herself, contenting herself to do the best that she can without being pained by what is lacking, by what is not in her power. To judge that which we can do or not, it is necessary to trust the experience of several times and not what our thoughts tell us. (6 March 1620)\textsuperscript{174}

It is Calvet’s opinion that at this point in her life, 1620, when she was beset with doubts about her progress towards God, Louise was in need of encouragement, not humbling.\textsuperscript{175} Be that as it may, the direction is sound and even echoes the teresian doctrine.\textsuperscript{176}

In discussing Louise’s feelings of abjection, caused by her self-scrutiny to acquire the self-knowledge that leads to humility, Michel counseled her to wait upon God, to ask for it and to cooperate faithfully, and with profit from the means that God would give to acquire this knowledge and humility. In a letter on Louise’s birthday, he stated:

The more the soul divests herself of her own efforts and activity, the more she will see clearly what to do and what to leave. Let her business be with God. Let her seek and love Jesus-Christ. Let her bind herself to him. Let her honor his life, his work and his sufferings. For the rest only fidelity of the soul adhering to God, who lacks nothing of which she experienced will furnish her with sufficient opportunities. (August 12, 1621)\textsuperscript{177}

A letter just prior to Louise’s “Lumière” deals with her uncertainty towards God. Michel counsels her to try to bear this in peace, to be open to God, and to find stability in the peace of the mercy of God. He finishes the letter by saying: “When I am in Paris I very willingly will assist you all I can....” (28 March 1623, from Fountainebleau).\textsuperscript{178}

\textsuperscript{174} Ibid., Doc. 828, 977.
\textsuperscript{175} Calvet, 36.
\textsuperscript{176} Berulle read Teresa of Avila on his knees, and undoubtedly Michel would have been conversant with her doctrine. Continually, Teresa advised her sisters to wait upon God to lead them in prayer and not to seek what God was not ready to give them.
\textsuperscript{177} Charpy, \textit{Documents}, Doc. 829, 978.
\textsuperscript{178} Ibid., Doc. 832, 980.
Jean-Pierre Camus. Bishop of Belley, and spiritual advisor to Louise until her meeting with Vincent de Paul.

Whatever the frequency and intensity of Michel's spiritual counsels to Louise, the fact remains that he was in the center of the "founders" of the French School of Spirituality, was drinking from its source and communicated this to Louise. The above letters bear the imprint of Bérullian thought in submission to the will of God, forgetfulness of self, humility, honoring the humanity of Jesus, and trusting in the mercy of God.

2.2.2 Bishop Jean-Pierre Camus

Jean-Pierre Camus, Bishop of Belley, was Louise's spiritual director prior to Saint Vincent de Paul. He was associated with the Marillac family and was a close friend of both Saint Francis de Sales and Saint Vincent de Paul. Also he was associated with Bérulle, and probably Madame Acarie's circle. He followed Louise's spiritual progress and counseled her in her life situations. This is evidenced by his correspon-

179 In 1595, Louise's father, Louis de Marillac, married Antoinette Camus, aunt of Jean-Pierre Camus. Louise's spiritual director, Bishop Camus, was a close friend of Francis de Sales, and after Francis' death wrote a five-volume portrait of him (Darricau, DGS, 620). It was Camus who suggested Vincent de Paul as Louise's new spiritual director.

180 Camus erected a monument to Bérulle in the Chapel of the Carmelite Monastery of the Incarnation (Houssaye, III, 508).
dence with her between 1623 and 1626. Certainly because of his relationship with Francis de Sales, he would have encouraged Louise’s devotion to Francis’ writings. In March of 1623, he gave Louise and her husband the rare permission to read the Bible in French.\textsuperscript{181} He advised her in her retreats and cautioned her about her penchant for spiritual things.\textsuperscript{182} He counseled her to attach herself to Jesus Christ, to unite her crosses with those of His, to put her trust in Him, to move out of herself in times of sadness and to be less dependent on her directors, seeing them in God and God in them.\textsuperscript{183} In a letter prior to 1625, Bishop Camus told Louise that he was consoled to know that her exercises of recollection and retreat were so useful and enjoyable, but that she should take them like honey, rarely and temperately because she had, in his opinion, a certain spiritual avidity that needed restraint.\textsuperscript{184}

In her family trials and spiritual doubts, Camus was compassionate and supportive with Louise. He was aware of her tendencies to be somewhat dependent on her directors and to be introspective. With gentle directness he exhorted her to be dependent on God and to be confident and joyful. His letters to Louise are warm, personal and reassuring.\textsuperscript{185} In Camus, Calvet sees a true director, but he also posits that Camus perhaps had not sufficient forcefulness to restrain Louise’s self-questioning, self-analysis and self-contempt.\textsuperscript{186} That Louise was very close to Camus is evident in her anxiety about changing directors when he was not to be within reach in Paris. This concern was calmed when, in her “Lumière” of Pentecost 1623, God reassured her that He would send her a new director, but not immediately.\textsuperscript{187}

\textsuperscript{181} Charpy, Documents, Doc. 831, 980:

\textit{J’estime que les Supérieurs pourront permettre non seulement sans danger mais avec utilité à Monsieur Le Gras et à Mademoiselle sa femme la lecture de la Sainte Bible, en français, selon la traduction des Docteurs de Louvain. En foi de quoi j’ai écrit et signé le présent témoignage à Paris, le 8 mars 1623. JEAN PIERRE, évêque de Belley.}

At this point in time, following the Reformation, the Church was cautious about the reading of the Bible in the vernacular, and hence the permission for an approved version.

\textsuperscript{182} Charpy, Documents, Doc. 830, 979; Doc. 837, 984.

\textsuperscript{183} Ibid., Doc. 833, 981; Doc. 836, 983; Doc.837, 984; Doc. 840, 987.

\textsuperscript{184} Ibid., Doc. 830, 979; \textit{“...Mais il en faut prendre pour vous comme du miel, c’est-à-dire rarement et sobrement; car vous avez une certaine avidité spirituelle qui a besoin de retenue.” Could this not be what Michel de Marillac was trying to caution her against in his earlier counseling?}

\textsuperscript{185} Ibid., Docs. 830, 833, 834, 836, 837; 979-984.

\textsuperscript{186} Calvet, 39.

\textsuperscript{187} SWLM, 2. A.2-LIGHT.
Francis de Sales, whose writing greatly influenced Louise.

In light of the influence of the initiators of what has come to be known as the French School of Spirituality, Camus too would have been in contact with the _courant_ of the day. He was an intimate friend of Francis de Sales, who was directly involved with Bérulle, Madame Acarie and Michel de Marillac. Hence it is likely that Camus, at least while in Paris, also frequented this circle and was exposed to their doctrine, which in turn he directly or indirectly shared with Louise.

2.2.3 Francis de Sales

There is no doubt that Francis de Sales had a great impact on the spirituality of Louise de Marillac. She herself attests to her devotion to him and to her constant use of his books, _Introduction à la vie dévote_, (1609) and _Traité de l’Amour de Dieu_, (1614). Perhaps Louise’s strong focus on doing the will of God was influenced by Francis’ books, since being attuned to the will of God and conforming oneself to it was a main tenet of Francis de Sales’ spirituality.188

Louise credits the grace of her “Lumière” of 1623 to the intercession of Francis de Sales. She wrote:

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188 Louise specifically referred to her reading of the _Traité de l’Amour de Dieu_, Books 8 and 9 (Uniting our Will to the Will of God), _SWLM_, A.10, 704; and “Philotée,” _Introduction à la vie dévote_, _SWLM_, A.1, 689.
I have always believed that I received this grace from the Blessed Bishop of Geneva because before his death, I had greatly desired to communicate these trials to him and because since that time, I have had great devotion to him and have received many graces through him.\textsuperscript{189}

On his last stay in Paris from October 1618 to October 1619, Francis made important spiritual contacts with Bérulle, Vincent de Paul, Bishop Camus, Mère Angélique, Arnauld and Port-Royal. At this time, he and Jane de Chantal selected Vincent de Paul to be Superior of the Visitation Sisters in Paris. It was probably during this trip that Francis visited Louise de Marillac and very likely met her uncle Michel. Gobillon, Louise’s first biographer, states that she met Francis during this 1618-19 sojourn in Paris.\textsuperscript{190} Dirvin posits that “even if no one had recorded a meeting between him and Louise, it would have almost certainly to be presumed, since she traveled in those circles where he was likely to be found.”\textsuperscript{191} She knew the Visitation sisters, and through them probably met Jane de Chantal who had come to Paris with Francis.\textsuperscript{192} As well there would have been Salesian influence through Camus and Vincent de Paul who, as we have seen, were closely associated with Francis de Sales.\textsuperscript{193}

2.2.4 Bérulle

Although there is no mention of Bérulle in Louise’s correspondence she would have been in contact with his writings and theology through her uncle Michel, who was closely associated with him.\textsuperscript{194} Bérulle published his book \textit{L’Estat et les grandeurs de Jésus} in 1623 and undoubtedly Louise would have read this. His \textit{Vie de Jésus}, published in 1629, just before his death, crystallized his teachings on the Incarnation. It

\textsuperscript{189} SWLM, 2. A.2-LIGHT.
\textsuperscript{191} Dirvin, 36.
\textsuperscript{192} Louise was a close friend and confidant of Mère Catherine de Beaumont (Charpy, \textit{Documents}, Doc. 838, 985).
\textsuperscript{193} It has already been noted that Camus, Louise’s spiritual director prior to Vincent de Paul, a great friend and associate of Francis de Sales, wrote Francis’ first biography. The close relationship between Francis de Sales and Vincent de Paul has also been mentioned. Francis chose Vincent as Superior of the Visitation Convents in Paris, a duty which he fulfilled until his death.
\textsuperscript{194} As previously noted Michel de Marillac, a leading lay man in the spiritual renewal of France, was closely associated with Bérulle in both spiritual and civil matters.
Pierre Cardinal de Bérulle, the most influential figure in the development of French spirituality during the early 17th century.

would seem however, that given Louise's education, social status and spiritual inclination, it would be most unlikely that she would not have been exposed to Bérulle's writings and spirituality. It is also probable that she was associated with the Carmelite nuns who were supporting and encouraging Bérulle's doctrine, especially on the Incarnation of Jesus. This is corroborated by Bishop Camus in his directions to her regarding her retreat in July of 1625.195

From her writings and collected documents we do know that Louise

195 Charpy, Documents, 983. The Carmel de la rue Chapon, founded in 1617, was near Louise's home on rue Courteau-Villain.

Doc. 837, 984. In a letter of 26 July 1625 Camus directs Louise as follows: "...As for your retreat, follow the advice of some good spiritual Father as P. Ménard of the Oratory, or even the Reverend Mother Madeleine or the Mother Superior of the Visitation and go with confidence."

It is very noteworthy that Mère Madeleine of Saint Joseph, a Carmelite, was a close friend and supporter of Bérulle, that P. Ménard of the Oratory would have been exposed to Bérullian spirituality, and that the Superior of the Visitation, Mère Catherine de Beaumont, would have been steeped in Salesian spirituality.

had a solid spiritual life by the time she came under Vincent’s direction in 1625. We know also that she had been exposed to Bérullian doctrine, which was current in Parisian spiritual circles by this time.

2.2.5 Vincent de Paul

From 1625-1660 Vincent de Paul was Louise’s spiritual director. It is from their correspondence, their mutual direction of the Daughters through the Conferences, letters of Louise to her sisters, and her spiritual writings during this period of her life that we find the maturation of her theological thought and practice -- her spirituality.

It is certain that Vincent de Paul influenced Louise’s spirituality through his counsels, his suggestions for readings, and his prudence in directing her prayer life and charitable activities. However, rather than shaping it, one might say that he, in his wisdom, recognized the virtue and the potentiality and, determined not to rush ahead of Providence, guided, encouraged, challenged, and tempered her spiritual avidity. With the passage of time and the development of their relationship over thirty-five years, Louise and Vincent became as one soul united in the love of God and love of neighbor. Yet, even to the end he encouraged her in a healthy detachment from earthly loves and a total attachment to Divine Providence.

The theme of Vincent’s influence on Louise, or better, the interrelatedness of their spiritualities, might serve as a topic for another study. It will suffice for this study to indicate briefly what particular aspects of Louise’s spirituality Saint Vincent might have influenced in relation to the basic characteristics of the French School of Spirituality.

Pierre Coste states that Saint Vincent de Paul had several masters in the spiritual life, two of whom were Bérulle and Francis de Sales. Vincent de Paul and Bérulle were close associates and friends, but to what degree Vincent could be termed a definite disciple of Bérulle seems to be debatable. Certainly he was exposed to Bérullian doctrine since Bérulle had been his spiritual director and Vincent had lived for a time

196 Coste, Life & Works, III, 354.
197 CWS: Bérulle, 81. Thompson writes that Saint Vincent de Paul (1581-1660) goes his own way, according to Cognet, although Cognet thinks he was more influenced by Bérulle than anyone else. Vincent seems to have transposed Bérulle into more simple, pastoral terms, stressing especially the Bérullian accent on interiority and personal commitment to Jesus.

Coste writes that Vincent most resembled Bérulle and Francis de Sales, that his spiritual teaching descended in a straight line from them, that he was not a slavish disciple but transformed their teaching according to his own practical spirituality (Life & Works, III, 355-356).
at the Oratory. Vincent had a great esteem for Bérulle’s sanctity and as his directee obeyed him implicitly as manifesting the will of God. Hence it was through Bérulle that Vincent became curé at Clichy, and that he became associated with the de Gondi Family. Haussaye suggests that Vincent greatly admired Bérulle but did not share the same filial friendship with Bérulle that he did with Francis de Sales. At the death of Bérulle, Vincent declared to his priests that Monsieur de Bérulle was “one of the holiest men that he had known.”

Strands of Bérullian spirituality are found in Vincent’s spirituality. Most characteristic of Bérullian thought were Vincent’s Christocentricism and his dedication to mission endeavors and priestly formation. Although similar in focus to Bérulle, Vincent de Paul had different nuances. In his Christocentricism Vincent did not focus solely upon the various interior states of Jesus, the Incarnate Word, but equally he emphasized the mission of Jesus, especially to the poor; and, he called his priests and sisters to imitate both the spirit and actions of Jesus in this mission. Whereas Bérulle’s orientation tended to be more Johanine and Pauline, Vincent appeared to be more in the synoptic tradition, frequently quoting Luke and Matthew. Perhaps it is the simplicity of this gospel mission, and the imitation of Jesus in his ministry to the poor, that Vincent enriched in the spirituality of Louise de Marillac; enriched because Louise was involved in serving the poor prior to her meeting with Vincent de Paul. However, it was this precise mission which bonded them in the great gospel works of charity, and which united their hearts and hands in the love of Christ and neighbor. The pastoral and ecclesial aspects of the French School of Spirituality were certainly characteristic of Vincent, and, in cooperation with him, Louise highly developed these traits in her own spirituality and mission.

2.2.6 Conclusion

From the foregoing it is evident that Louise de Marillac was surrounded with the thought and doctrine of the French School of Spirituality. She was of an aristocratic family, and it was the fervent aristocrats of Paris who were in the forefront of the spiritual renewal. Louise was educated and well-read, thus the best of spiritual writings

198 Houssaye, I, 7.
199 What influence Condren, Olier or Eudes had on Louise de Marillac is not known as there are no direct references to them in her writings. We do know however that Vincent was closely connected with them.
would have been available to her. Just how deeply Louise imbibed this spirit, and how it shaped her spirituality, is best disclosed in her written word and in the example of her life as we shall see.

2.3 Basic Principles of the French School of Spirituality as Illustrated in the Writings of Saint Louise de Marillac

2.3.1 Introduction

To facilitate the illustration of the characteristics of the French School of Spirituality in the Writings of Saint Louise de Marillac we shall utilize the five principles outlined by Deville, plus the characteristics of the language of spirituality presented by Ladrrière.

2.3.2 Theological Principles

As stated earlier, five theological principles characterize the French School of Spirituality. Each of these is evident in the Writings of Louise de Marillac. It is impossible to include all the references from Louise’s Writings to each principle, hence only a few will be presented to situate Louise de Marillac within the French School of Spirituality.

i. Theocentric Trinitarianism

In the Writings of Louise de Marillac, there are frequent references to God and the Trinity. Her prayers and meditations are replete with words of adoration of, and petition to, the Trinity. The following excerpts indicate this:

I adore you, Most Holy Trinity, one God in three Persons, and I thank You for all the graces that, in Your goodness, You have bestowed upon me.\(^{200}\)

You are my God and my all. I recognize you as such and adore You, the one true God in three Persons, now and forever. May your love and that of Jesus Crucified be eternally exalted.\(^{201}\)

For Louise, God was all — her beginning and her end. In her Trinitarian prayer she had a strong devotion to the Holy Spirit and to Jesus, the Incarnate Word. In speaking of both she related them to their

\(^{200}\) SWLM, 770, A.49B.

\(^{201}\) Ibid., 694. Written c. 1626.
life in the Trinity:

I adore you, O my God, and recognize that you are the author of my existence... I trust in your mercy. I beg you to send the assistance of the Holy Spirit... for my soul and all souls redeemed by the blood of Jesus Christ. 202

Like Bérulle, Louise adored God in the unity of his essence and persons, and saw in this divine unity the call to unity which she gave as a model of community. In her direction of the Daughters of Charity she continually identified their call to live in unity with that unity expressed by the Trinity. In 1647 she wrote the following words to her Sisters: “Following the example of the Blessed Trinity, we must have but one heart and act with one mind as do the three divine Persons.” 203

Even Louise’s devotion to Mary was situated in the Trinity. There are several references to Mary as the daughter of the Father, the mother of the Son and the spouse of the Holy Spirit. Louise wrote: “May all creatures... render you the glory you deserve as the beloved Daughter of the Father, Mother of the Son and worthy Spouse of the Holy Spirit.” 204

ii. Christocentrism

The most characteristic theological focus of the French School of Spirituality was its Christocentrism, which centered on the Incarnation of Jesus. For Louise as for Bérulle the Incarnation was the prolongation of the Trinity upon earth. This theological principle was central to the spirituality of Louise de Marillac. For her everything related to Jesus: He was the Word, the revelation of the Father, the second person of the Blessed Trinity. Thus Louise emphasized his divinity, but simultaneously she stressed his holy humanity. She wrote thus:

May the glory of the true humanity of Jesus Christ appear since it is as Man, although united to the Divinity, that He will judge us at both the particular and general judgement.... 205

202 Ibid., 691.
203 Ibid., 771, A.85.
204 Ibid., 696. It would seem that Louise’s description of Mary as “Daughter of the Father” is unique to her as the usual terminology was “Spouse of the Father.” Bérulle explores a correspondence between the “paternity” of God and the “maternity” of Mary (CWS: Bérulle, 48). Cf. DS, 1, 1560: “Il est Père de Celui dont la Vierge est la Mère.”
I desired to admire on the one hand the true humanity of Jesus and, on the other, His divine works and the word of God which He spoke....

The humanity of Jesus became for Louise the ultimate model for her relationship with God and with her neighbor. Jesus was her way to the Father. Truly the leit-motif of the French School of Spirituality became her own: “I live now, not I but Christ lives in me” (Gal.2:20). This idea is expressed in Louise’s own words when she wrote:

I desired no longer to subsist of myself. After having been continuously sustained by the grace of God, it seemed to me that all that I am is but grace. I implored God to draw these graces to Himself and thus I would be totally His.

In her own life, and in her counseling of her Sisters, Louise always emphasized the imitation of Jesus Christ. The poor were Jesus Christ and thus their masters. Louise emphasized the states of Jesus, his hidden life, his humility, his poverty, and his self-emptying, which became archetypes for the Christian. Central to a life of imitation of Jesus was a life of charity, especially to the poor. Louise frequently wrote in the following vein:

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206 Ibid., 702. A.9.
207 Ibid., 702. A.9. These retreat notes written prior to 1630 find a resonance in the words of John Eudes in his Royaume of 1635:

For it is essential to be detached from all things, no matter how holy and divine, so that we might be animated by the Spirit of Jesus, which is the Spirit of Christianity.

That is why I say that we must be detached from God in a certain way, that is, from the delights and consolations that ordinarily accompany the grace and love of God.... (CWS: Béruelle, 310).

Cf. DS, I, 1567: Herein Bérulle speaks of a stage in the spiritual life where “Elle (soul) est obligée de se détacher des dons de Dieu pour s’attacher à Dieu même et atteindre ce que sainte Thérèse appelle l’union transformante....”

208 This was a recurring theme throughout both Louise’s and Vincent’s exhortations to the Sisters. In a Conference of 25 November 1658 Vincent told the Sisters: “The poor are our masters, they are our kings; they must be obeyed, and it is no exaggeration to call them our kings because Our Lord is present in the poor” (Leonard, Conferences, IV, 218).
Blessed are those persons, who, under the guidance of Divine Providence, are called upon to continue the ordinary practices of the life of the Son of God through the exercise of charity. 209

Louise’s devotion to Mary was always connected with Jesus. Louise saw all of Mary’s honors as rooted in her motherhood of Jesus and from this flowed all graces obtained through Mary. 210 Louise herself wrote: “All truly Christian souls should have great devotion to the Blessed Virgin, especially in her role as Mother of God....” 211

As Savior, Jesus redeemed humanity; as perfect adorer and servant of God, he incorporated humans into his life and love. For Louise this was particularly evident in the Eucharist wherein through him, with him and in him, Christians render praise to God. In a reflection on Holy Communion, Louise wrote the following:

We must try to discover in God some motive for this admirable and, in a human sense, incomprehensible action. Since there is no apparent reason, other than His pure love, we must render honor and glory to God by acts of praise, adoration, love and gratitude for His loving invention which unites Him to us. 212

As for the French School, so too for Louise, contemplation was found in the fond, the depth of one’s being, one’s true self, where the person could be at one with God and from this union bring forth good deeds. It was through contemplation that the person shared in the self-emptying of Jesus, in his sufferings and death, to be one with the Father in his adoration of the Father. Louise wrote:

I desired to sow in the heart of Jesus, all the actions of my heart and soul in order that they may grow by sharing in His merits. Henceforth, I shall exist only through Him and

209 SWLM, 821.
210 It is precisely this point of Mary’s connection with Jesus that both Pope Paul VI and Pope John Paul II stressed in their recent documents on Mary (Pope Paul VI, Marialis Cultus, 1974; Pope John Paul II, Redemptoris Mater, 1987).
211 SWLM, 785. M.33.
212 Ibid., 822.
in Him since He has willed to lower Himself to assume human nature.\textsuperscript{213}

Like the French School's devotion to the Word Incarnate, Louise desired to possess fully and interiorly the life of Jesus grafted onto the Christian by Baptism. As Jesus' ultimate act of offering glory to the Father was his supreme act of submission to the Father's will, central to Louise's spirituality was her desire to do the Will of the Father in imitation of Jesus. She prayed:

I hereby renounce self-love with all my heart and choose Your holy will as the directing force in my life. I shall recognize Your will by reflecting upon the life which Your Son led upon earth, to which I shall strive to conform my own. O Holy Will of my God! How reasonable it is that You should be completely fulfilled! You were the meat of the Son of God upon earth. Therefore, You are the nourishment which will sustain within my soul the life received from God.\textsuperscript{214}

Another basic characteristic of the French School was the imitation of the interior states of Jesus such as his humility, his simplicity and his hidden life. For Louise this too was important, but she concen-

\textsuperscript{213} Ibid., 693. A.15B.

\textsuperscript{214} Ibid., 713. A.15. This great desire to follow the Will of God was predominant in both Francis de Sales and Vincent de Paul. It may have been through their influence that this ideal was so strongly reinforced in Louise's spiritual life.
trated on the imitation of his actions as well. This is evidenced in the following writings:

Willingly must I allow Jesus to take possession of my soul and reign there as King. Thus, I shall preserve the joy I experience in realizing that each of us individually may desire, and, indeed, has the power to become His well-beloved.

Because Jesus took our misery upon Himself, it is only reasonable that we should follow Him and imitate His holy, human life. This thought absorbed my mind and moved me to resolve to follow Him wholeheartedly, without reservation.

Louise’s desire to imitate Jesus as fully as possible permeated her thoughts, words and actions. Jesus was her model, the focus of her life, through whom she related to God and to her neighbor. For Louise, the Incarnation of Jesus was the greatest gift of the Father. As Mary had given life to Jesus in her heart and her body, likewise Louise desired

In reference to the inner dispositions of Jesus, Louise generally uses the words “virtue,” “disposition,” “mysteries” and “spirit,” rather than the term “state” commonly used by Bérulle:

SWLM, 718: “disposition of hidden life;” 694: “...my resolution to practice the most holy virtues of humility, obedience, poverty, suffering and charity in order to honor these same virtues in Jesus Christ who, in His love, has often called me to imitate Him;” 825: “I suddenly felt moved by the desire that Our Lord should come to me and communicate His virtues to me.” Louise counseled her Sisters to work and to suffer in the spirit of Jesus. 552: “I beseech Our Lord to be present to each of you so that you may work in His spirit;” 251: “Suffer then, in His same spirit, through submission to all that God wills of you....”

In her terminology and explanations, Louise seemed to simplify this aspect of the French School, bringing these principles within the understanding of her Daughters, and thus all Christians. It is interesting to read CCC, #’s 512-540 on this theme.

Another nuance of Louise to the French School was her stress on the imitation of the actions of Jesus’ life. Both she and Vincent stressed with their Daughters that to truly imitate Jesus there must be the imitation of His spirit combined with that of His actions.

SWLM, 715. A.5.
Ibid., 715. A.5.
to give life to Jesus in her heart. In a retreat note she wrote:

I desired to give life to Jesus in my heart by love, thus rendering Him present in me. This presence will be the sole object of my attention as it was for the Blessed Virgin at the crib.218

iii. Marian

As in the French School of Spirituality, Louise de Marillac's devotion to Mary was intellectual and doctrinal, yet also simple and tender. In Louise's thought and devotion, Mary was never separated from her Son or from the Trinity, but was united to both as "the beloved Daughter of the Father, Mother of the Son and worthy Spouse of the Holy Spirit."219 Louise stressed that Mary's great dignity was grounded in her divine maternity, thus always linking her with Jesus. Louise wrote:

O my God, why am I unable to reveal to the world the beauty which You have shown me as well as the dignity of the Blessed Virgin? Everything is comprised in her title of Mother of the Son of God. How admirable are her deeds! With good reason the Church addresses her as the Mother of Mercy because she is also the Mother of Grace.220

Louise united herself with Mary and Jesus as she meditated on the birth and infancy of Jesus, and Mary's special participation in it. During the Infancy of Jesus, Louise saw Mary as the "contemplative mystic of the Incarnate Word."221 In the Paschal mystery too, she saw Mary's participation in a mystical fashion. Thus Louise rejoiced in the special graces of Mary while frequently contemplating the various states of her motherhood. A reflection of Louise on 15 August 1659 ran thus:

I reflected on the greatness of the Blessed Virgin as Mother of the Son of God who desired to honor her to such a degree

218 Ibid., 702. A.9.
220 Ibid., 774. A.14b. These words of Louise are reminiscent of those of Bérulle who wrote: "Her grace and life as the Mother of God is the foundation and origin [of everything else]. She is born in order to be the Mother of God" (CWS: Bérulle, 47). Mère Madeleine's writings also depict the maternity of Mary and the resultant "privileges because she is the Mother of God" (CWS: Bérulle, 50).
221 CWS: Bérulle, 50.
that we may say that she participated in some way in all the mysteries of His life and that she contributed to His humanity by her virginal blood and milk. Considering her in this light, I congratulated Mary on her excellent dignity which unites her to her Son in the perpetual sacrifice of the Cross, reenacted and offered on our altars.222

Throughout her life, Louise chose Mary as her model and mother, and always encouraged and directed her Sisters to do the same. She counseled her Sisters thus:

Let us take Our Lady as the model of our daily lives and bear in mind that the best way to honor her is by imitating her virtues...her purity,...her humility,...her detachment....223

Louise often spoke of the Immaculate Conception, prayed to Mary as the Immaculate Conception and inculcated this devotion within her Sisters. Many references such as the following are found in her writings:

Because of this divine action, your conception was immaculate since the Father applied to you the anticipated merit of the death of Jesus Christ. May all generations to come bless your birth.224

Given Louise's strong devotion to, and promotion of, the Immaculate Conception of Mary it is not surprising that two hundred years later Mary should announce herself in this manner to one of Louise's Daughters.225

222 SWLM, 831.
223 Ibid., 785.
224 Ibid., 695. A.4, 1626. Bérulle sees Mary's maternity as the basis for her immaculate conception, a term he uses (CWS: Bérulle, 47). However, there seems to be no indication that he or the other initiators of the French School invoked Mary under this title. Given the year, 1626, Louise may have been a leader in inculcating this devotion. A popular devotion did develop to the Immaculate Conception during this century, and Pope Clement IX, in 1708, gave approval to the growing cult and ordered all Catholics to observe the feast of the Immaculate Conception (Dupré and Saliers, 108).
225 Mary appeared to Saint Catherine Laboure at the Motherhouse, rue du Bac, Paris, in 1830, and identified herself as the Immaculate Conception.
In her final spiritual testament to her Sisters, Louise emphasized the importance of Mary as she exhorted them: “pray earnestly to the Blessed Virgin that she may be your only Mother.”

iv. Pastoral and Ecclesial

In the true spirit of the spirituality of the French School, Louise was a woman of the Church. Her writings and her life reveal a strong fidelity to the Church’s teaching and a strong pastoral orientation. For Louise the Church was the Mystical Body of Christ through which she encountered Jesus sacramentally, and in her neighbor, especially in the poor.

On the Eucharist she wrote:

It seemed to me that it is in this way that the holy humanity of Our Lord is continually present to us. He is among us by the application of His merits and by the sanctification of souls. His presence is like air without which the soul is lifeless.

Regarding her neighbor one reads: “I felt a great attraction for the holy humanity of Our Lord and I desired to honor and imitate it insofar as I was able in the person of the poor and of all my neighbors.”

Louise’s prayers and writings reflect her strong ecclesial ties, plus her acknowledgment of and desire for pastoral renewal including that of the clergy. In reference to the end of the Congregation of the Mission she wrote:

To present the end of the Association to the Blessed Virgin... to render glory to God in the person of His Son since it seeks to work for the perfection of priests... and to reanimate the hierarchy of the Church with its primitive fervor.

Louise’s great social endeavors, rooted in the mission of Christ are well known. As Christ came to minister to the poor, so too Louise,

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226 SWLM, 835.
227 Ibid., 784. A.14.
228 Ibid., 820.
229 Ibid., 697.
230 As noted previously, for an excellent treatment of this subject see: Margaret Flinton, D.C., Louise de Marillac: Social Aspect of Her Work (New York: New City Press, 1991).
through the Mystical Body of Christ, the prolongation of Jesus' mission on earth, served the poor both corporally and spiritually. She always encouraged her Sisters to do the same:

Our vocation of servants of the poor calls us to practice the gentleness, humility and forbearance that we owe to others. We must respect and honor everyone: the poor because they are the members of Jesus and our masters; the rich so that they will provide us with the means to do good for the poor.\(^{231}\)

In the pastoral sphere, spiritual direction was an important facet of spiritual renewal at this time and Louise directed retreats for women, and acted as spiritual guide to women of the aristocracy, as well as to her own Sisters.\(^{232}\)

The sacramental life of the Church was very important for Louise and she frequently referred to her Baptism and the resultant graces which prepared her for mission. She often spoke of the Eucharist, and it was in this context that she received a number of her special mystical graces.

Her prayer life was centered on the liturgy of the Church, as she aligned her devotions to the feasts of the Church and the scriptures. She encouraged her Sisters to do likewise: “Let us celebrate in a special way, the Church feasts honoring Mary and meditate during the day on the mystery proposed.”\(^{233}\)

Louise's personal love and esteem for the Church is evident in the following excerpt from her writings:

O Trinity, perfect in power, wisdom and love You bring to completion the work of founding the Holy Church. You desire her to be the Mother of all believers. To this end, You console her by instructing and strengthening her in the truths which the Incarnate Word had taught her. You infused into this Mystical Body the union of your works,

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\(^{231}\) SWLM, 468. L.424, 1655.

\(^{232}\) Ibid., 679. L.40; 385. L.337; 379. L.405. Cf. Coste, Life & Works, I, 399. This charism of spiritual direction seems to have been unique to Louise as it did not come down to her Daughters as a ministry of the Company.

\(^{233}\) SWLM, 785. A similar recommendation regarding praying in tune with the liturgical year is found in the writings of Béruelle. Cf. DS, I, 1572.
giving her the power to perform miracles so as to enable her to bring to souls the true witness which You willed her to bear to Your Son.\textsuperscript{234}

That the Church was the reason and mainstay for the mission of the Sisters is clear from these words of Louise written to her Sisters in 1656:

As long as we are part of the Church Militant, we must continue to fight. If God, in His goodness shows us His mercy and admits us into the Church Triumphant, we shall then enjoy that intimate union with Him which we can never completely attain here on earth. Let us then, my dear Sisters, apply ourselves diligently to the corporal and spiritual service of the sick poor for the love of Jesus Crucified in whom I am....\textsuperscript{235}

2.3.3 Prayer and Approach to Mission

Like the founders and foundresses of the French School of Spirituality, Louise de Marillac was a mystic. She was a contemplative in action.\textsuperscript{236} Her mystical experiences are attested to in her writings, and her profound life of charity and service to the poor could come only from a deep union with God and identification with the Incarnate Jesus.

Louise's writings indicate at least three mystical experiences, all of which are related to Eucharist. Her Pentecost experience of 1623 occurred in the context of the Mass, and two of her other mystical experiences, that of 1630 and that of 1660, took place at Communion. In the former she experienced a mystical espousal and in the latter a deep

\textsuperscript{234} Ibid., 820. A.26, 1657.
\textsuperscript{235} Ibid., 515. L.531.
\textsuperscript{236} Bérulle speaks of the necessity of the contemplative and active lives being joined in charity as they honor by their common service the same Jesus Christ (DS, I, 1572). To his priests Vincent de Paul said the same thing: "It is to do as Our Lord did and after him, his apostles; it is to join the office of Martha to that of Mary" (CED, XI, 41, as cited by Dodin in "Saint Vincent de Paul, mystique de l'action religieuse," Mission et Charité, 29-30, 1968, 42).

Vincent simplified and expanded this principle even further when he so frequently spoke to his Daughters of leaving God in prayer to serve Him in the sick: "To leave God only for God, that is to say, to leave one work of God to perform another, either of greater obligation or merit, is not to leave God" (Leonard, Conferences, I, 284). For both Vincent and Louise, service must be rooted in the spirit of Jesus, which was nurtured in an interior life and expressed in loving service of neighbor. Louise lived this "Martha and Mary" reality, and with Vincent exhorted her Daughters to do the same.
union with Jesus. Of these latter she wrote:

At the moment of Holy communion, it seemed to me that Our Lord inspired me to receive Him as the Spouse of my soul and that this Communion was a manner of espousal... I felt moved to leave everything to follow my Spouse; to look upon Him as such.\(^{237}\)

When I was receiving Him and for a long time afterward, my mind was filled with an interior communication which led me to understand that Jesus was bringing not only Himself to me but also all the merits of his mysteries. This communication lasted all day. It was not a forced, interior preoccupation. It was rather a presence or a recurrent recollection.\(^{238}\)

As a contemplative in action, Louise had a profound sense of mission characterized by the hallmarks of the French School of Spirituality.\(^{239}\) It was ecclesial and pastoral. Louise was convinced that the mission entrusted to her and to her Sisters was truly the mission of Christ, of the Church. It was to flow from Christ and through the Church to the living, suffering members of the Mystical Body of Christ. In imitation of the mission of Jesus, the Sisters were to be healing ministers to the poor, especially the sick poor and the most destitute, the "poorest of the poor" as Louise called them. As Louise's ministry flowed from her spirituality so must that of her Sisters. She exhorted them thus:

...It is not enough to visit the poor and to provide for their needs; one's heart must be totally purged of all self-interest, and one must continually work at the general mortification of all the senses and passions. In order to do this, my dear Sisters, we must continually have before our eyes

\(^{237}\) SWLM, 704. A.50, Feb. 5, 1630. Olier also speaks of a eucharistic communion in mystical terms as "a marriage of Our Lord with the soul" (CWS: Bérulle, 63).

\(^{238}\) SWLM, 833. M.8B, 1660. Louise also mentions experiencing physical pain in conjunction with some of her interior experiences (691, A.13, c.1621; 692, A.15B; 711, A.29). It is of note that Louise describes her experiences of prayer, whereas Vincent seems to be silent about any of his personal prayer experiences.

\(^{239}\) The French School of Spirituality was concerned with the theological and spiritual renewal of the individual, but emphasized the ecclesial and pastoral dimension of mission as well (CWS: Bérulle, 55).
our model, the exemplary life of Jesus Christ. We are called to imitate this life, not only as Christians, but as persons chosen by God to serve Him in the person of His poor.\textsuperscript{240}

Although Louise had a concern for priestly reform and the holiness of the clergy, her main focus was the mission to the sick and suffering poor, both of France and Poland. With Vincent de Paul, she emphasized both the spiritual and corporal needs of the poor. Pastorally she was interested in catechetics and in parish life. To this end she wrote a Catechism for her Sisters so that they might instruct the village girls. This Catechism included the theology of her time.\textsuperscript{241} In conjunction with Vincent she formed and directed Confraternities of Charity within the parishes. On another pastoral level she was successful with Vincent in pioneering a new form of vowed life in which women devoted themselves to apostolic works, lived in community but not in cloister and were not under the jurisdiction of the Bishop. In truth Louise was a pioneer and a prophet of her day.

2.3.4 Pedagogy and Practices

The pedagogy and practices employed by the French School to nourish its spiritual life and prayer consisted primarily of the sacraments, scripture and liturgical prayer.\textsuperscript{242} Louise's spirituality was representative of these three qualities. Her sacramental emphasis was on Baptism and the Eucharist, while her gospel life was focused on a strong imitation of Jesus and Mary both in their internal states and their external conduct. Characteristic of Louise's spirituality was her devotion to the following internal states of Jesus: his self-emptying, his desire to do the Will of God, his humility, simplicity and charity, his hidden

\textsuperscript{240} SWLM, 260. L.217, 1648. Cf., 773.

\textsuperscript{241} Charpy, Documents, 958. A.48. In March of 1648, Louise spoke to Vincent de Paul regarding the Sisters using the Bellarmine catechism. Vincent replied: “Mademoiselle, there is no better catechism than that of Bellarmine and if all our Sisters knew it and taught it, they would teach only what they must teach, since they have to instruct, and they would know what the Parish Priests must know... They cannot learn any better or more soundly than from that book” (CED, XIII, 664-665 as quoted by Reverend Bernard Koch in “The role of the laity in the Church according to Saint Vincent - Active participation of Saint Louise de Marillac,” Echoes of the Company #2 (February 1992), 73-74).

\textsuperscript{242} Louise’s prayer life was also characterized by such practices as: vocal prayer, meditation, the Rosary, spiritual reading, examination of conscience, fasting, retreats, particular prayers such as the \textit{Veni Sancte} and \textit{Jesus nostra Redemptor}, and devotion to the saints and her Guardian Angel (SWLM, 689. A.1).

For a fuller treatment of the Prayer Forms of the time, see: DS, V, 939, #4 — \textit{La Vie Chrétienne}, Modalités de la prière et Les dévotions.
life and his poverty. In his external conduct, Louise imitated the mission of Jesus to the poor and his love of neighbor.

As already mentioned, Louise’s prayer was liturgical, always in tune with the Church’s seasons and thought. She used the scriptures for her prayer and spiritual reading, concentrating particularly on Saint Paul and the gospel of Saint John, which were the scriptural basis of the French School of Spirituality.243

Another practical device of the spirituality of this time was spiritual direction. Many of Louise’s writings attest to her submission to ongoing spiritual direction. Her longest and most significant director was Saint Vincent de Paul, who directed her from 1625 to 1660.244

The French School of Spirituality was also characterized by Vows of Servitude to Jesus and Mary. Although there is no mention of vows per se, there are examples in Louise’s writings of her Consecrations, particularly to Mary, the Mother of God.245

Without doubt, Louise utilized and exemplified the various practices which were prevalent during this time to develop and to sustain one’s spirituality.

2.3.5 Scriptural Basis of the French School of Spirituality

According to Deville, the fifth principle of the French School of Spirituality was its scriptural basis, which centered on Saint Paul and Saint John. Their theology emphasized the Paschal Mystery wherein through Baptism one died and rose with Jesus. They also stressed the dying to one’s old self. Both of these principles were central to Louise’s spirituality. In a letter to her Sisters in 1658 Louise wrote: “I must also

243 SWLM, 827. A.27 — ON THE PURE LOVE WE HAVE VOWED TO GOD; meditation on Jn.12:28-35; 775. A.20 — THOUGHTS ON THE CROSS; Saint Paul and the privilege of suffering in Jesus’ name.

244 Three of Louise’s spiritual directors are referred to in her writings, and four of them in Coste. Coste, Life & Works, I, 184: Père Honoré de Champigny, Provincial of the Parisian Capuchins; Michel de Marillac, her devout uncle; Bishop Jean-Pierre Camus, Bishop of Belley, Francis de Sales and Vincent de Paul. At different times Père Honoré, Bishop Camus and Vincent de Paul were her regular directors. Coste states that Francis de Sales visited Louise during his 1618-19 sojourn in Paris and guided her then (ibid.). Louise’s writings indicate that Bishop Camus was her director during a period of her married life (c.1614) until Vincent replaced him in late 1624 or early 1625. Père Honoré directed her earlier and is the person who refused her entrance to the Daughters of the Passion (Capuchins) c.1610.

As most leaders in the French School, Louise herself was a spiritual director of others. Her writings also attest to the fact that she gave direction to her Sisters and ensured it for them from the Priests of the Mission (SWLM, 474, 588, 638).

245 SWLM, 695. A.4.
learn to renounce the abuse of my senses and passions, because no one will rise with Jesus Christ who has not first of all died in this way."246

The Mystical Body of Saint Paul’s teaching was strongly emphasized and we have seen how deeply Louise incorporated this into her spirituality and ministry.247

The operation of the Holy Spirit was paramount in the French School of Spirituality and we find this in Louise’s spirituality as well.248 Several references have already been cited to this effect. Galatians 2:20, “It is no longer I who live but it is Christ who lives in me,” became the leit-motif of the French School of Spirituality.249 The characteristic prayer of the school might be that of the early Christians; “Come Lord Jesus; Come and live in us.” Echoes of these prayers are evident in Louise’s prayers and reflections.250

2.3.6 Original Spiritual Experience

Deville speaks of an original spiritual experience as a hallmark of the French School of Spirituality. Each of the originators of the School seem to have had a particular spiritual experience and often it was

246 Ibid., 600. L.580.

247 Ibid., 820. A.26: “O Trinity perfect in power, wisdom, and love! You bring to completion the work of founding the Holy Church... You infused into this Mystical Body the union of your works...”; 468: “We must respect and honor everyone: the poor because they are the members of Jesus Christ and our masters...” Cf., 113, 801.

248 SWLM, 817. A.26 -- REASONS FOR GIVING ONESELF TO GOD IN ORDER TO RECEIVE THE HOLY SPIRIT: “One of the greatest losses that a soul can experience by not participating in the coming of the Holy Spirit is that the gifts infused at Baptism do not have their effect.” Cf., 802. A.25 -- THE PURITY OF LOVE NECESSARY TO RECEIVE THE HOLY SPIRIT; 742: “Often, they should invoke the Holy Spirit in order to purify their thoughts, words and actions.”

249 Unless otherwise stated, Biblical references are from The Holy Bible, NRSV: Catholic Edition (Toronto: Canadian Bible Society, 1993).

250 SWLM, 822. M.72 -- ON HOLY COMMUNION; 833. M.8B -- ON HOLY COMMUNION: “When I was receiving Him and for a long time afterward, my mind was filled by an interior communication which led me to understand that Jesus was bringing not only Himself to me but also all the merits of His mysteries.”

834. A.49 -- PRAYER BEFORE HOLY COMMUNION: “Give yourself entirely to me, my God. May Your precious body, Your holy soul, and Your glorious divinity, which I adore in this Holy Sacrament, take complete possession of me.”
related to the Incarnate Word, Jesus. This reality became fundamental to the reunion of spirituality and theology.

Louise’s spirituality was rooted in the Incarnation of Jesus. She meditated on this mystery from various aspects. Louise saw Mary’s Immaculate Conception as a preparation for this great mystery and, uniting herself with Mary, meditated on Jesus in Mary’s womb. Louise stressed both the hidden life and the mission of Jesus. In most of her letters Louise referred to the Paschal mystery as she signed them “in the love of Jesus Crucified.” Her devotion to the Holy Spirit was in the context of the spirit of the Risen Jesus. Louise ardently desired to be one with Jesus and knew that to be totally united with Him she must die, first spiritually to her “unredeemed” self, and eventually physically to this mortal life.

Louise de Marillac’s whole life was a journey into the Paschal

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251 Briefly these experiences seem to be identified as the following: Bérulle’s initial experience occurred during his retreat of 1602 when he realized he was called to a Christocentric orientation, and the call was crystallised by a mystical grace of 1607 when he knew that he was being sent “annoncer aux nations et aux peuples les conseils de Dieu et ses desseins” (Deville, 37).

Olier also had initial experiences that focused his spiritual life; the first was in Loreto (1630), when on a pilgrimage he was healed of an eye disease and felt “a great desire for prayer.” He spoke of this as a “conversion” experience. A second event was his meeting with Mère Agnès de Jésus, (1634) who told him that “he was destined to begin the first foundations of seminaries in the Kingdom of France” and invited him to great intimacy with Jesus. This, according to Deville, could be called a real “mystical initiation” (Deville, 67).

Jean Eudes spoke of two particular graces which he received that gave direction to his life. At the age of twelve (1613), by a special grace of God’s goodness, he began to know God and to communicate every month after a general confession. God also gave him the grace to make a vow of chastity. The second great grace Eudes mentioned was a two-year physical illness (1623-25) which followed his ordination and prevented him from external work. This time he consecrated to retreat, prayer, reading pious books and other spiritual exercises. He wrote that he must eternally bless and thank the goodness of God for this (Deville, 85).

Similarly, Louise’s original experience was her Lumière of 1623, in which God instantly removed her doubts of faith and vocation and revealed to her both her future director and her mission (SWLM, 1).

252 Of Louise’s devotion to Jesus, Coste writes: “Some of the notes made by Mlle Le Gras (Louise) during her retreats have been preserved, and show her to us with eyes fixed on Jesus Christ, Her Model, Master, King and All; this is the thought to which she ever returns” (Life & Works, I, 203).

253 Numerous letters end with some form of the words: “in the love of Jesus Crucified” (SWLM, 250, L.82).

254 Louise uses the term “unredeemed self” in writing to one of her sisters: “If you find it difficult to accept this manner of acting, mistrust yourselves and believe that the unredeemed self is not yet dead in you” (SWLM, 476, L.394).
Mystery of Jesus. From the chaos of the darkness and death of her own life and sufferings she walked into light and life with Christ Jesus, her Lord and Spouse.

2.4 Language of the French School of Spirituality as evidenced in the Writings of Louise de Marillac

In his description of the Language of Spirituality, Ladrière suggests that it is a language of faith which is characterized by proclamation, liturgy, preaching and theology. Fundamentally it relates to a personal experience of faith, of one's union with God and expresses how this experience was internalized and became a means of witness. The language of spirituality is often poetic in its use of images as well. In addition, the language of a particular spirituality has its own common structure and vocabulary.

Even a cursory study of the writings of Louise de Marillac illustrates a sufficient number of the above qualities to situate her writings within the language of the French School of Spirituality.

Louise's reflective writings and her correspondence are frequently couched in the language of faith, as she proclaims such theological realities as the Providence of God, the Incarnation of Jesus, the gospel message of redemption, the mystery of suffering and the mission to the poor. Scripture and liturgy are often referred to in this context. Many examples of these points have been cited already, but the following references serve to highlight these same principles:

The day and the season when God permitted us to recognize His Divine Providence by the remarkable events surrounding the fall of our ceiling reminded me once again of my profound interior conversion at the time when His goodness gave me light and understanding concerning the great anxieties and difficulties I was then experiencing.

I then thought that our entire family should have great devotion to the Feast of Pentecost and total dependence on Divine Providence. However, this should be manifested in a very special way.

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256 SWLM, 768. A.75.
I trust, my dear Sister, that Our Lord has let you taste the sweetness reserved for souls filled with His love amidst the sufferings and anguish of this life. If such is not the case and you are still standing on Calvary, rest assured that Jesus Crucified is pleased to see you retire there and to know that you have enough courage to want to remain there as He did for love of you. You may be certain that you will emerge from there gloriously.\(^{257}\)

Louise's personal reflections and spiritual counsels to her Sisters are rooted in, and express the experience of, her own faith journey, her union with God and the resultant witness to this in her life. As a teacher of the spirit, Louise counsels, suggests methods of prayer, and gives witness to her own spiritual experiences. This is evidenced in the following excerpt from a letter of Louise to her Sisters, who were experiencing the difficulty of overwork because of lack of numbers to nurse the sick:

What can you do in this situation my dear Sisters? Nothing but practice patience and imitate, as far as you are able, the example of Our Lord who consumed His strength and His life in the service of His neighbor. By so doing you will find strength not only for your bodies but even for your minds which will receive very extraordinary consolations. This will lead to the sanctification of your souls by an interior grace that will produce unfailing union and cordiality among you. The mutual support generated will make easy all that nature finds difficult. It will also enable you to find consolation even in face of your repugnances and in the denial of your personal satisfaction\.\(^{258}\)

The language of the French School of Spirituality has both its own peculiar images and vocabulary.\(^{259}\) Many of these are evident in Louise de Marillac's writings. One image that became prominent in the latter

\(^{257}\) Ibid., 570. L.545B.  
\(^{258}\) Ibid., 540. L.513.  
\(^{259}\) The two images that framed the French School of Spirituality were that of the "sun" and the "heart." The former was introduced by Bérulle and later employed by Olier; the latter was used by Olier but highly cultivated by Jean Eudes. Eudes and Olier also used the image of "fire." (DS, I, 1552; XI, 748). Cf. CWS: Bérulle, 21, 54 and DS, V, 942 #2, La dévotion au Sacré-Coeur.
period of the French School of Spirituality was the heart image popularized by Saint Jean Eudes (1648 - the heart of Mary; 1672 - the heart of Jesus). It is interesting that Louise, as early as 1644, used for her personal seal the symbol of Christ Crucified, in the center of a heart surrounded by flames and bearing the words, "The Charity of Jesus Crucified Impels Us." The painting of the Lord of Charity, attributed to Louise, also presented the exposed heart of Jesus surrounded by radiant flames. The great devotion that Louise had to the Crucified Christ would also undoubtedly embrace a devotion to the pierced heart of Jesus.

Not only the image of the heart but the language of the heart and of love was characteristic of the French School of Spirituality. Such language is evident in Louise's writings as the following examples indicate:

...I desired to sow, in the heart of Jesus, all the actions of my heart and soul in order that they may grow by sharing in His merits.

Listen to Him, O my soul, as if He were speaking to you alone, "I thirst for your faithful love."

Willingly must I allow Jesus to take possession of my soul and reign there as King. Thus, I shall preserve the joy I experience in realizing that each of us individually may desire and, indeed, has the power to become His well-beloved.

As pointed out by Ladrière, each school has its descriptive vocabulary. This was true of the French School of Spirituality, which had its framework of spiritual terms and principles that were common to its writings. In the various quotations throughout this document many examples of these terms have been seen. In this section alone the following characteristic terms and ideas of the French School have been

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261 This painting hangs in the Motherhouse at rue du Bac in Paris.
262 SWLM, 693. A.15B, c.1622.
263 Ibid., 702. A.21.
264 Ibid., 715. A.5, c.1632.
mentioned: adoration, Maternity of Mary, adherence to the Will of God, Mystical Body, heart and love language, annihilation and devotion. Other terms commonly found in this vocabulary are: state (état), surrender, elevation and nothingness. The following two quotations will serve as a summary representation of Louise de Marillac’s use of the vocabulary of the French School of Spirituality.

The final paragraph of Louise’s “Rule of Life In The World” written c. 1628 reads as follows:

I adore You, O my God, and recognize that You are the author of my existence. Because of the love I owe You, I abandon myself entirely to Your holy will in my life. Although I am filled with powerlessness and reasons for humiliation on account of my sins, I trust in Your mercy. I beg You, because of the love You have for Your creatures, to send the assistance of the Holy Spirit so as to produce the full effect of the plan which Your holy will has had, from all eternity, for my soul and for all souls redeemed by the blood of Jesus Christ. 265

In a letter to Vincent de Paul in 1646 Louise wrote the following regarding a personal private devotion:

It honors the hidden life of Our Lord in his state of imprisonment in the womb of the Blessed Virgin and congratulates her on her happiness during those nine months. The three small beads hail her under her beautiful titles of Daughter of the Father, Mother of the Son, and Spouse of the Holy Spirit. That is the main thought behind the devotion. 266

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265 Ibid., 689. A.1, c.1628.
266 Ibid., 140. L.303B.
2.5 Conclusion

From the foregoing study, it can be seen that the Writings of Louise de Marillac exhibit both the basic theological principles and the Language characteristic of the French School of Spirituality. Louise de Marillac, however, does bring her own nuance to this School in her simplification of the expression of the theological principles, their trans­position to the practical application of daily life, and the possibility of the union of the contemplative and active life for ordinary Christians. Thus Saint Louise de Marillac may be deemed, in her own manner, to be situated within this genre of Spirituality and Spiritual Writing.267

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If we are assailed by temptations and trials, we become completely dejected, imagining ourselves to be in a deplorable state. And truly this would be our condition if we did not cling to God by the tip of our souls, saying to Him, from the depths of our hearts, ‘My God, do whatever you will; I belong entirely to you!’ Despite these temptations, we must perform all our actions purely and simply for the love of God.

(Spiritual Writings of Louise de Marillac, L. 546)

My dear sisters, if we want to please our good God, we must not look so much to what we want to do but to what He wants us to do.

(Spiritual Writings of Louise de Marillac, L. 578)

Offer yourself frequently to Him and ask Him what He wants you to do. Do not worry about your strength. Rest assured that you will receive all that is necessary from the goodness of God.

(Spiritual Writings of Louise de Marillac, L. 575)